STEVE HULLFISH

ART OF THE CUT

CONVERSATIONS WITH FILM AND TV EDITORS

A **Focal Press** Book

ROUTLEDGE

Art of the Cut

Conversations with Film and TV Editors

STEVE HULLFISH

NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2017
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2017 Taylor & Francis

The right of Steve Hullfish to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-23865-7 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-138-23866-4 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-29713-2 (ebk)

Typeset in Avenir
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Contents

1. Acknowledgments
2. Introduction
3. Film Editor Biographies
4. **1 Project Organization**
    1. Cards on a Wall
    2. Project Organization
    3. Scene Bin Organization
    4. Scene Bin Organization with JPEG Markers
    5. Selects or KEM Rolls
    6. Sequence Organization
    7. Organizing a Timeline Layout
    8. ScriptSync
5. **2 Approach to a Scene**
    1. Screening Dailies (Rushes)
    2. Watching Dailies Backwards
    3. Finding a Starting Place
    4. Fast and Rough to Start
    5. Using Select Reels
6. **3 Pacing and Rhythm**
    1. Pacing Is Musical
    2. What Determines Pacing?
    3. Letting It Breathe
    4. Pacing Due to Screen Size
7. **4 Structure**
    1. Length of First Assembly
    2. Working the First Assembly
    3. Hitting Beats
    4. Structure
    5. Intercutting

6. Killing Your Babies and Eliminating Shoe Leather
7. Screening
8. First Assembly in TV

8. **5 Storytelling**

1. Editing Is Foundational to Storytelling
2. Speaking into the Script
3. Character
4. Perspective
5. Structure
6. A Student of Story

9. **6 Performance**

1. Editing as Stewardship
2. Finding the Performance
3. Performance That Tells the Story
4. Shaping Performance
5. Editing Bracketed Performance
6. Using Audio from Different Takes Than Picture
7. Split Screen: The Invisible Weapon
8. Performance Needs Context

10. 7 Sound Design

1. Sound to Sell Visual Edits
2. Selling the Environment
3. Collaboration with Sound Team and Assistants
4. ADR (Automated Dialogue Replacement)

11. 8 Music

1. The Purpose of Temp Music
2. Choosing Temp Music
3. Cutting without Temp
4. Songs and Diegetic or “Source” Music
5. Temping a Franchise Film
6. Using Score

12. **9 Collaboration**

1. Landing the Gig
2. Styles of Collaboration

3. Notes
4. Social Skills
5. Don’t Edit the Way You Think the Director Wants
6. TV’s Collaborative Environment

13. **10 Documentary**

1. Schedule
2. Approaching the Material
3. ScriptSync
4. Shot Selection
5. Pacing and Rhythm
6. Structure
7. Sound Design
8. Music
9. Collaboration
10. Notes and Revisions
11. Miscellaneous Documentary Wisdom

14. **11 Miscellaneous Wisdom**

1. How Did You Break into the Business?
2. Emotion
3. Geography
4. Learn from Your Mistakes
5. How Do You Judge the Editing of Others?

Acknowledgments

Many people have been impressed with my ability to land interviews with so many Oscar winners, Oscar nominees and Emmy winners. I have to humbly state that perhaps the most impressive part of writing this book can't be attributed to me at all. The credit for having the deepest "rolodex" in the business goes to Marianna Montague. Marianna is known by virtually everyone in the post-production business as a consummate "fixer" and is an employee of Avid Technologies as Director of Online Communities and Forums and the Customer Advocate. For most Avid editors, she is the true beating heart of the company. I can't have you read this book any further without knowing that it was Marianna who provided the contacts for 80% of the interviews in this book … maybe 90%. Marianna, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the dozens and dozens of emails you responded to throughout the last few years, requesting contacts for the most elite editors in Hollywood and throughout the world. I pushed the bounds of our friendship, and you were always happy to help. If you know Marianna, you probably love her as much as I do. But if you're one of those elite editors that is angry that Marianna gave out your personal contact information, be comforted in the thought that maybe I tracked you down myself, so she didn't give out your personal information.

Writing a book takes a team. The head of my team is Simon Jacobs, the editor for Film and Video at Taylor and Francis—the parent company of Focal Press. Simon has been incredibly supportive of the idea since I first pitched it and has guided me through the entire process with an unerring hand. I'd also like to thank the proofreaders, technical editors, and colleagues who provided peer review of the idea and of the text, as well as the book cover designer and layout artists.

These interviews were originally done for Provideocoalition.com, a division of Moviola. Without their support, this book would not have been possible. The entire writers corps at PVC is made up of gurus in all kinds of production and post-production disciplines, and my fellow writers were very supportive and helpful in pursuing the series. I'd especially like to thank Jeremiah Karpowicz, Scott Simmons and Moviola's Patty Montesion. Patty helped with interns from Moviola who did some of the transcription work: Mike Dudiak, Andrea Espinoza, Kent Ewing, Talya Joffe, Hanna Lancer, Daniel McNamara, Aneesa Nash, Katelyn Nelson, Victor Redman and An-

gela Robinson-Wheaton in Moviola's Education Department. Also, some of these interviews were done for Manhattan Edit Workshop's Sight and Sound Workshops, and for those connections, I'd like to thank Janet Dalton, their Director of Education.

Clearly, the most critical people to the success of this book are the film and television editors who were gracious enough to talk for hours about their craft. Thanking them by name here in the acknowledgments doesn't make much sense. As you read the book or check out the brief biographies, please consider that the wisdom that you're reading is due to each of these talented professionals giving their time and sharing their knowledge selflessly to further the understanding of the craft. To each of them, I am so grateful for taking my call and letting me be part of sharing their knowledge with the world.

Finally, my family has always been supportive of my writing and has sacrificed to allow me to write. I thank my parents, who have always taught me the importance of writing well and have supported my pursuit of creative occupations my whole life. My brother, Brian—assisted by my dad—thoroughly edited the book. They graciously provided great insight and the keen eyes and ears of experienced and concise writers. My family provided me with the life lessons that allowed me to tackle six books while working full time as an editor. To my wife, Jody, and our children, Haley and Quinn, thank you for your sacrifices while I wrote. I love you. I hope that—instead of seeing me as "that guy who was always on his computer"—you saw the effort that it took to write these books, and it demonstrated to you that pursuing a dream requires hard work and never giving up.

Introduction

This book was inspired at a precise moment that I can easily identify. That moment was during the acceptance speech for Best Supporting Actress of the 86th Oscars in 2014. The winner of the award was Lupita Nyong'o for her brilliant performance in Steve McQueen's movie 12 Years a Slave. Of course she thanked the director and her co-stars, but what struck me came at the end of her acceptance speech: "Joe Walker, the invisible performer in the editing room, thank you."

It's probably a bit clichéd to say that my opinion of editors is that we toil away in relative obscurity—the weight of the film balanced on our shoulders—and nobody really realizes our contribution to every moment of the story. So to hear a young actress with an appreciation for the delicate and intimate dance that she performed with an invisible man in a dark room fired up my curiosity. I had to meet this editor who had inspired a thank you on such a large stage.

Though I had done a few interviews with editors prior to Joe Walker, his interview—and the interview with Mark Sanger, who won the Oscar that year for Gravity—really started the series. I have to say, especially to aspiring editors, that I was continually impressed with the generosity of my fellow editors in contributing to the greater discussion and advancement of the art of editing through these interviews. The brotherhood and sisterhood of editors are alive and well and thriving as a friendly and communal group. Each time I finished an interview, I felt buoyed and validated by a distant colleague who was open, honest and willing to share. Not all professions are like that. They made me proud to call myself an editor.

Over the years, I had read many interviews with editors in the trade press, and I never really felt satisfied with the questions that were asked or with the obvious follow-up questions that were never posed after controversial statements or opinions. Having just completed my second feature film as an editor—and being in the middle of an editing career that was more than 30 years old—I felt like I knew the questions that editors would want to pose. Granted there are certainly more talented and experienced editors than me who could write this book and pose these questions, but nobody had done it to my satisfaction.

Two of my previous books, The Art and Technique of Digital Color Correction and Avid Uncut, both relied heavily on the opinions and wisdom of experts in the field. When it comes to creative endeavors, I'm always wary of books written from a single perspective. That one perspective is certainly valid and can often have wisdom from decades of experience at the highest level, but with editing, one point of view simply won't do. So I set out to interview a wide range of editors who had done work at a level that I aspired to, and that I felt other editors would also find aspirational and inspirational. That quest led me to interview more than 50 editors from around the globe: editors with more than a dozen Oscars and more than three dozen Oscar nominations, plus numerous Emmy and Eddie winners. All of them have worked on projects that I felt my fellow editors, and aspiring editors, would be interested in learning more about. I sought out editors with international perspective, including 19 editors from the UK, Australia, Hong Kong, France, the Netherlands, El Salvador and other points around the globe. I also sought out as many of the best female editors as I could talk to, with women making up about 20% of the editors in the book: slightly exceeding the representation of women in the overall field. These diverse perspectives are critical in presenting an accurate representation of the state of our art.

My interview technique was honed during a decade of editing The Oprah Winfrey Show. The field producers who developed the pieces I worked on were very good at guiding interviews and in listening intently for clues as to where they should dig deeper. I tended to "go with the flow" on these interviews, letting my subject take me into areas where I felt the exploration of a topic would lead to new discoveries and reveal the passion of the editor I was interviewing.

The complete interviews with each editor are available on the book's companion website, but I didn't believe that the reader would be able to easily digest the true wisdom of these 50 editors by simply reading each interview—a total of almost half a million words. I felt that the value I could bring to the book was to discover common subject matter in the answers and gather them together in chapters, organizing and curating them into a giant virtual conversation between the best editors in the world.

I have to admit to a good deal of selfish intent in writing this book. I am an editor of very small reputation—at least in the area of scripted drama—and with the limited experience of only three feature films and a few documentaries. I wanted to do these interviews for my own enlightenment. I wanted to see if the things I've learned during my 30-year career lined up with editors whose work I admire. You can see some of that in my questions and replies.

But the greater value I hope to bring with this book is to reveal the similarities and differences in approach among the group. When you hear an opinion or a methodolo-

gy of a single person, it's very difficult to determine if that is a valid opinion. You can weigh it against your own experience or against what you believe is common sense, but without a vast amount of experience and wisdom, it is very difficult to verify the truthfulness of an approach or opinion. With the group of talented editors gathered in this book, each opinion has a weight of its own, born from experience and talent, but as a group, the ability to see multiple confirmations of an approach, or an impassioned dissent against the norm, is of huge value. What does everyone agree on? What do people not agree with and why? Where does your personal voice as an editor fall into this discussion of your colleagues? That is the strength of this book.

For experienced editors, I think this book will read like editors having a friendly collegial discussion sitting around the American Cinema Editors' clubhouse: both a great confirmation of the things you hold true and moments of inspiration and seismic revelation. For aspiring editors and students of the craft, I want this book to be a rare glimpse of the thought processes of editors who communally have over a thousand years of experience and have cut thousands of films and TV shows. This is the chance to eavesdrop and soak up their hard-won knowledge. For young editors and students, I have included glossary terms and lingo in call-outs on the page, so if you don't understand a word or phrase, hopefully, the answer will be nearby without having to search a separate glossary.

I also called out the "nuggets" or major take-aways that really resonated with me. So on many pages, a key quote that rang true with me is presented in large bold text. For film students and teachers, these call-outs and glossary terms should lead to productive discussions and class assignments. For experienced editors, I hope that there are passages where you nod your head in the affirmative and think, "been there, done that." Or maybe, scattered throughout the book, you see one of these nuggets as a revelation that will help you with a future project.

I hope you will continue to find additional value in the chapters that we could not include in the print version of the book, but that are available on the book's companion website. The bonus chapters include a chapter where editors discuss how and why they edited specific scenes in their movies or TV shows. In addition to running out of room in "print," we moved this bonus chapter to the companion website because the discussions rely heavily on URL links to scenes that are available on the web. Some of these scenes may not be up forever (as I don't know whether they infringe on copyright or who put them up). Many of the scenes were provided by the studio's PR firms. But it was easier to provide links to the videos on the companion website than in the book. There is also a bonus chapter on editing with VFX (visual effects). This chapter pertains to fewer editors and to even fewer aspiring editors, but there's some

great information about editing big tent-pole movies that are filled with VFX, not to mention simple dramatic films that have VFX where you might never expect them. As mentioned earlier, if you really like part of a discussion in the book and want to read the rest of the interview with a specific editor, those interviews are available via the companion website. For teachers and students who may be using this book as a textbook or as recommended reading, the companion website has study guide questions and areas to explore for projects and further discussion. Finally, since I expect that this series of interviews will continue after this book goes to print, I will occasionally update the companion website with links to new interviews that are not included in the book.

To all the aspiring editors who read this book, I'd like to close this introduction by looping back to Lupita Nyong'o's Oscar acceptance speech. I hope her words inspire you: "When I look down at this golden statue, may it remind me (and you) that no matter where you're from, your dreams are valid."

The companion website can be found at www.routledge.com/cw/Hullfish

Film Editor Biographies

At the writing of Art of the Cut in the fall of 2016, the editors interviewed for this project have been nominated for more than 40 Oscars for Best Editing and have won 12, not to mention numerous other editing awards. Among these acclaimed interviewees are 20 international editors and 10 women. Combined, this group has edited more than a thousand movies or TV shows, and their combined wisdom spans well over a thousand years of work.

Steve Audette, ACE, has been working in documentary since 1996. His work has contributed to many Emmy Award-winning documentaries, as well as Peabody, Polk and DuPont Columbia Award-winning programs. In 2008, Steve was nominated for an Eddie Award from American Cinema Editors, for Best Documentary Editor. Steve is currently Senior Documentary Editor for FRONTLINE/PBS and previously edited NOVA.

Kirk Baxter, ACE, is an Australian film editor who has worked primarily with director David Fincher, winning back-to-back Oscars for The Social Network and The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, as well as a nomination for The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, and two primetime Emmy nominations for House of Cards and Big Love. His peers at ACE have recognized him with an Eddie nomination or a win nearly every year since 2009, including a nomination for Gone Girl.

Alan Edward Bell, ACE, has cut three of The Hunger Games series. He also edited (500) Days of Summer, Water for Elephants and The Amazing Spiderman.

Fabienne Bouville, ACE, is a French-born editor who has been working consistently in scripted TV with stints as an editor on Nip/Tuck, Glee, American Horror Story and Masters of Sex.

Maryann Brandon, ACE, has been a long-time editing collaborator with the prolific J. J. Abrams, extending back to their days on the TV show, Alias. Her career as an editor began in the 1980s and includes such notable film productions as Star Trek into Darkness, Super 8, Mission Impossible III and animated features Kung Fu Panda 2 and How to Train Your Dragon. She was nominated for a 2016 Oscar for Best editing

with her editing partner, Mary Jo Markey, for Star Wars: Episode VII—The Force Awakens.

David Brenner has 23 credits as an editor going back to the 1980s with Talk Radio, Born on the Fourth of July and The Doors. Born on the Fourth of July won an Oscar for Best Editing for David and his co-editor, Joe Hutshing. His credits also include such notable blockbusters as Independence Day, The Patriot, Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides, Man of Steel, 300: Rise of an Empire and Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice.

Conrad Buff IV, ACE, has been a long-time collaborator with famed director, James Cameron, including editing Titanic, for which he won an Oscar with co-editors James Cameron and Richard Harris. He was also nominated for Terminator 2. Other films include The Huntsman, Dante's Peak, The Abyss and Spaceballs. He also worked in visual effects post on classics like Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back, Raiders of the Lost Ark, E.T. and Ghostbusters.

Julian Clarke, ACE, is a Canadian-born editor with credits going back to when he was 24 years old, hitting it big with the breakout success of District 9 in 2009, for which he was nominated for an Oscar. Since then, he has cut The Whistleblower, The Thing, Elysium, Chappie and Deadpool. Many of these films have been with South African director, Neill Blomkamp.

Anne Coates, ACE, is a British film editor who has been nominated for an Oscar for Becket in 1965, The Elephant Man in 1981, In the Line of Fire in 1994 and for Out of Sight in 1999. Before any of those, she won an Oscar for editing Lawrence of Arabia in 1963. She has edited more than 50 feature films including Murder on the Orient Express, Erin Brockovich and Fifty Shades of Grey.

Clayton Condit co-founded the well-known and well-respected Minneapolis post house, Splice. His diverse editorial background includes cutting music videos for Prince. Clayton's previous feature film experience included cutting the movie, Older than America, starring Bradley Cooper, and 2016's Voice from the Stone. He also cut the PBS documentary, America's Lost Landscape: The Tallgrass Prairie.

Tom Cross, ACE, turned cutting a short film into a 2015 Oscar for Best Editing when that short became the feature film, Whiplash. He also co-edited Joy and edited La La Land.

Paul Crowder, a London-born editor, has been cutting documentaries since 1996 and is probably best known for the documentary, Dogtown and Z-Boys. Also, Amazing

Journey: The Story of The Who (which was nominated for a Grammy), 1, and Ron Howard's The Beatles: Eight Days a Week—The Touring Years. He also edited many Behind the Music episodes. He started life as a drummer, with bands that had hits on the UK charts. Paul won an Eddie for best edited documentary in 2004 for Riding Giants.

Kelley Dixon, ACE, paid her dues as an assistant editor on projects like Reservoir Dogs, Good Will Hunting and Without a Trace to name a few, then moved into the editor's chair for the seminal TV series, Breaking Bad. She has also edited the fantastic spin-off, Better Call Saul, as well as episodes of The Walking Dead and Michael Mann's pilot, Luck. She edited the pilots of Preacher and The Interestings.

Glenn Ficarra and **John Requa** have co-written numerous feature films, including Bad Santa, The Bad News Bears and Focus. They also co-directed Focus and Crazy Stupid Love. Their latest directing project was Whiskey Tango Foxtrot with Tina Fey and, as with Focus, they collaborated on the editing of the film with Jan Kovac.

Jeffrey Ford, ACE, has been cutting films as an editor since 2000 with The Yards. He also cut, among others, Public Enemies and Monte Carlo before taking on the superheroes of Marvel in 2011 with Captain America: The First Avenger, Ironman 3, Captain America: The Winter Soldier, Avengers: Age of Ultron and Captain America: Civil War. He was nominated for an ACE Eddie for Best Editing for The Family Stone.

Billy Fox, ACE, has been nominated numerous times for Emmys for his editorial and producing work and won an Emmy as a producer for Law and Order. In addition to Law and Order, he has edited Pee-wee's Playhouse, Wings, Chicago Fire and Band of Brothers. Beyond his impressive TV credits, he has edited several features including Hustle and Flow, Four Brothers, The Crazies, Black Snake Moan and Straight Outta Compton.

Andy Grieve, ACE has an impressive list of mostly documentary features to his credit including Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief, The Armstrong Lie, We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks, an episode of ESPN's 30 for 30, The Carter, Errol Morris' Standard Operating Procedure and others. He also directed and edited Can't Stand Losing You: Surviving the Police.

Eddie Hamilton, ACE, is a British editor with feature film editing credits that started in 1998 with various low-budget indies but kicked into high gear in 2010 with the Kick-Ass movies, X-Men: First Class, Kingsman: The Secret Service and Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation.

Dan Hanley, ACE, is a long-time collaborator with director Ron Howard and his co-editor Mike Hill, ACE. The two of them have delivered a string of successful films including Splash, Backdraft and Apollo 13, for which they won an Academy Award for Best Editing. He also co-edited How the Grinch Stole Christmas, Cinderella Man, In the Heart of the Sea and Rush, for which they won the BAFTA Editing award, and Frost/Nixon, nominated for an Oscar.

David Helfand started his career as an editor on HBO's Dream On. That led to his years of cutting the hit comedy, Friends. Other assignments include working on Grosse Point, That '70s Show, The Middle, Weeds, The Mindy Project, Uncle Buck and Tina Fey's Great News.

Paula Heredia is a Salvadoran-born editor probably best known for a series of HBO documentaries and the documentary, Unzipped (for which she won an Eddie). She also won a Primetime Emmy for her editing of HBO's In Memoriam, NYC 9/11/01. She has been editing documentaries since 1990 and is now directing and producing many of the documentaries she edits. The documentary we spoke to her about for the book was an Animal Planet documentary called Toucan Nation.

Dylan Highsmith co-edited the feature, Star Trek Beyond. He also co-edited Furious 7 (nominated for a Saturn Award), Fast & Furious 6 (nominated for a Saturn Award) and the pilot for the TV show, Scorpion.

Mike Hill, ACE, is a long-time collaborator with director Ron Howard and his co-editor Dan Hanley, ACE. The two of them have delivered a string of successful films including Cocoon, Backdraft and Apollo 13, for which they won an Academy Award for Best Editing. He also co-edited How the Grinch Stole Christmas, A Beautiful Mind, Angels and Demons and Rush, for which they won the BAFTA Editing award.

Steve Hullfish started his career in documentary editing and was nominated for a national ACE Award before graduating from college. He edited The Oprah Winfrey Show for more than a decade and co-edited the feature films Courageous, War Room, Champion and the documentary feature, Clinton Inc. He has written or co-written five previous books on editing and color grading.

Jan Kovac is a Czech-born editor who started his career re-editing shows, like HBO's The Sopranos, from their original HBO broadcast down to a syndicated TV length at the LA post-production house, Five Guys Named Moe. While there, he met Glenn Ficarra. Glenn and John Requa directed Crazy Stupid Love, Focus and Whiskey Tango Foxtrot. Jan edited the last two of those, both on FCP-X.

Mark Livolsi, ACE, started out as an apprentice editor on Wall Street, moving up through the ranks for more than a decade, getting his first job as editor on Vanilla Sky, directed by Cameron Crowe, then cutting a series of well-known comedies, like Wedding Crashers, and movies like The Devil Wears Prada and The Blind Side. Most recently he edited Saving Mr. Banks, The Judge and The Jungle Book.

Mary Jo Markey, ACE, has been a long-time editing collaborator with the prolific J. J. Abrams, extending back to their days on the TV show Alias. Her career extends back into the 1980s and includes such notable film productions as Star Trek into Darkness, Super 8, Mission Impossible III, and animated features Kung Fu Panda 2 and How to Train Your Dragon. She was nominated for a 2016 Oscar for Best editing with her editing partner, Maryann Brandon, for Star Wars: Episode VII—The Force Awakens.

Kelly Matsumoto has edited or co-edited a string of big action movies, including Star Trek Beyond, Fast & Furious 6 (Saturn nomination), Fast Five (Saturn nomination), The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor, The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift, Van Helsing, The Mummy Returns and Meet the Fockers.

Tom McArdle, ACE was nominated for an Oscar in 2016 for his editing of Spotlight. His editing credits extend back into the early 1990s with documentaries, TV movies and feature films such as The Station Agent, which he wrote and directed.

Michael McCusker, ACE, got his start assisting David Brenner, who is also featured in this book. He was promoted to the edit chair for his first feature, Walk the Line, earning him an Oscar nomination for Best Editing and for which he won an ACE Eddie. Other features include 3:10 to Yuma, Australia, The Amazing Spider-Man, The Wolverine, 13 Hours and The Girl on the Train.

Craig Mellish, ACE, has spent 20 years at Ken Burns' company, Florentine Films. Craig was nominated for two Primetime Emmys for Best Sound Editing—Nonfiction Programming. He has worked on many of Ken Burns' seminal documentary films, including The National Parks, The Tenth Inning (two-part update to the 1994 series, Baseball) the Gettysburg film, The Address, The Dustbowl and The Vietnam War.

Steven Mirkovich, ACE, got his start working in editorial in the mid-70s. By the late-70s, he was the assistant editor on films like Hooper, Cannonball Run and Time After Time. In the early 1980s he moved into the editor's chair and quickly earned a reputation for his editing on action and thriller films. Steven has edited over 40 pictures, including Big Trouble in Little China, Broken Arrow and Con Air.

Stephen Mirrione, ACE, won the Oscar for Best Editing for Traffic in 2000. He also edited the entire Oceans 11/12/13 film series with Steven Soderbergh. The rest of his lengthy credit list includes The Hunger Games, The Monuments Men and Birdman. He continues his collaboration with Birdman director, Alejandro González Iñárritu, on The Revenant, for which he was nominated for another Oscar for editing.

Joe Mitacek, has cut about 50 episodes of Grey's Anatomy and has also cut Shonda Rhimes' Scandal. He's been an editor on Grey's Anatomy for seven years and started as a post assistant on Boston Public in 2003.

Vashi Nedomansky is a Czech-born editor who has a growing list of editorial credits on films like An American Carol and Sharknado II, but he's also called upon both as a colorist and editorial consultant. Most of this consulting work is due to his long-standing use of Premiere. Most recently he trained a team of Avid editors and assistants for their switch to Premiere Pro for Deadpool and created its workflow.

Cheryl Potter is an Australian editor, based in the UK. She has edited Australian TV, including their version of the reality TV show, Big Brother. She has assisted on The Martian and Baz Luhrmann's Australia, along with several other big budget productions including The Chronicles of Narnia: Voyage of the Dawn Treader and Dark Shadows.

Fred Raskin, ACE, has edited a number of great projects including 2014's Guardians of the Galaxy and Fast & Furious. As an assistant editor, he worked on both of Quentin Tarantino's Kill Bill movies and created a working relationship that launched him from assisting Tarantino's long-time editor, Sally Menke, to Tarantino's editor's chair on Django Unchained. He has been nominated for a BAFTA for Best Editing for Django Unchained and an ACE Eddie for Best Editing for a Comedy for Guardians of the Galaxy.

John Refoua, ACE, was nominated for an Oscar for Best Editing for co-editing Avatar. He's also cut numerous films including The Magnificent Seven, Southpaw and Olympus Has Fallen. His TV credits include CSI: Miami, Ally McBeal and Law and Order.

Jake Roberts is a London-born editor who started in documentaries and did some TV episodic editing before working on several features including Brooklyn, Trespass Against Us and Comancheria. His earlier work includes Starred Up and The Riot Club.

Kate Sanford, ACE, has been working as a professional in post since 1987 and has been in the editor's chair since 1994. Her credits include Sex and the City, Brooklyn Rules, The Wire, Boardwalk Empire, Show Me A Hero and—most recently—HBO's Vinyl.

Mark Sanger, ACE, is a British film editor who won the 2013 Oscar for Best Editing for Gravity. His credits also include an impressive list of films on which he assisted, including The Mummy and 102 Dalmatians, plus stints as a visual effects editor for films like Alice in Wonderland, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and Die Another Day.

Pietro Scalia, ACE, was born in Sicily. He began his career as an assistant editor for Oliver Stone on such features as Wall Street and Talk Radio. Later coming into his own with such films as JFK (for which he received a Best Editing Oscar), Pietro also received Best Editor Oscar nominations for Good Will Hunting and Gladiator. He won another Oscar for Best Editing for Ridley Scott's Black Hawk Down and was also nominated for a BAFTA for The Martian.

Margaret Sixel, ACE, is a South African-born, Australian editor. She won the 2015 Oscar for Best Editing for Mad Max: Fury Road. Margaret worked on the project for three years, wrangling almost 500 hours of footage into the final two-hour screening time of the movie. She has also edited the features Happy Feet and Babe: Pig in the City. She has also edited the documentary films 40 ,000 Years of Dreaming and Mary.

Lee Smith, ACE, an Australian-born feature film editor, counts among his numerous credits The Truman Show, Master and Commander, Batman Begins, The Prestige, The Dark Knight, Inception, X-men: First Class, The Dark Knight Rises, Interstellar and Sam Mendes' contribution to the James Bond franchise: Spectre. Accolades include two Oscar nominations for Master and Commander and The Dark Knight, two Eddie nominations for Best Editing and two BAFTAs.

Steve Sprung, ACE co-edited the feature Star Trek Beyond and has edited for TV, including Community, Entourage and Arrested Development (nominated for a Prime-time Single Camera Picture Editing Comedy Series Emmy). He also edited the pilot of Scorpion.

Job ter Burg, ACE/NCE (Netherlands Cinema Editors), has more than 70 editing credits including Elle, Reckless, Bringing Up Bobby, and Brimstone. He has worked several times with Dutch film director Paul Verhoeven of Robocop and Total Recall fame.

Leo Trombetta, ACE, has edited more than a dozen feature films, like Twin Falls I daho, and a range of TV shows like WB's Roswell, Michael Mann's Luck for HBO, AMC's Mad Men, Fox's Wayward Pines and Netflix's Narcos. He has also worked as a sound editor on such films as Bonfire of the Vanities and David Mamet's Homicide. Leo won an Emmy and an ACE Eddie for editing Temple Grandin for HBO Films.

Joe Walker, ACE, is a British film editor who started out cutting film as an apprentice at the BBC and has edited documentaries and, obviously, TV. He cut a trilogy of films for director Steve McQueen including 12 Years a Slave, for which he was nominated for an Oscar and a BAFTA in 2014. He edited Black Hat for Michael Mann, and his work on Sicario earned a 2016 Eddie nomination. He also cut Arrival with Denis Villeneuve and they are working on Bladerunner 2049.

Martin Walsh, ACE, is a British film editor who won the Oscar and the ACE Eddie for Outstanding Editing for Chicago. His credits as an editor date back nearly 30 years and include Wild West, Bridget Jones's Diary, Thunderbirds, V for Vendetta, Chicago, Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit, Cinderella and Eddie the Eagle.

Andrew Weisblum, ACE, has edited a wide variety of films including The Darjeeling Limited, The Wrestler, Fantastic Mr. Fox, Black Swan (for which he was nominated for an Oscar), Noah and Alice Through the Looking Glass. His TV work includes the pilot for Smash. He has more than a dozen credits from the edit chair and many, many more as an assistant or as a visual effects editor. His experience is both broad and deep.

Brent White, ACE, has edited some of the top comedies of the last decade: Ghostbusters, Spy, Anchorman, Step Brothers, Knocked Up, Talladega Nights and The 40-Year-Old Virgin. Most of these films have come in collaboration with a trio of well-known comedy directors: Judd Apatow, Adam McKay and Paul Fieg. He has also edited TV, including Desperate Housewives and Freaks and Geeks.

Sidney Wolinsky, ACE, has cut many of the premiere TV series in recent years: 33 episodes of The Sopranos, plus episodes of House of Cards, Boardwalk Empire, Walking Dead and Sons of Anarchy, his experience extends all the way back to Miami Vice. His more recent projects include Extant, Strain, Ray Donovan and Power. He was also editor on the feature films Howard the Duck (1986) and Maid to Order (1987). He won two Emmy Awards for The Sopranos and an Eddie Award for the Boardwalk Empire pilot.

David Wu, is a Hong Kong-born editor with more than 70 films to his credit. He mostly edited for a handful of elite directors—including John Woo and Tsui Hark—

who faithfully return to him film after film. His editing work includes Hard Boiled, The Bride with White Hair and Cold Steel. In addition to editing, Wu is also an accomplished director.

Mark Yoshikawa, ACE, was co-editor of The Hunger Games: Mockingjay—Part 1, The Tree of Life and the TV series Westworld.

Dan Zimmerman, ACE, started his editing career with The Omen. Other credits include Predators, Spy Kids: All the Time in the World in 4D with director Robert Rodriguez, and A Good Day to Die Hard. More recently Zimmerman edited The Maze Runner, Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials and My All American. His career began under the tutelage of his father, editor Don Zimmerman, ACE, who cut such classics as Rocky III, Night at the Museum and Men in Black 3. Dan's brothers, Dean and David, are also editors.

Chapter 1
Project Organization

Project organization is not sexy, but it becomes the strong foundation that allows the rest of the process to work well. In this chapter, editors will discuss organization at the project level and the bin level, organization of sequences and versions, and even timeline organization.

Organization is inherently a big part of many editors' approach to a scene, so there is some overlap between this chapter and Chapter 2: Approach to a Scene. This is because of the nature of the editing process and of the specific methodologies of some editors. For example, the creation of selects reels can be seen as both "organizing" and as "an approach."

This integration of the two ideas of "organization" and "approach" shows just how important it is to be organized.

Eddie Hamilton, Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation: I worked with Pietro Scalia on Kick-Ass, and I remember him saying how he had come in to help on another movie and how the project was in poor shape, and you couldn't find anything and couldn't find any archived cuts, and I remember thinking to myself, "I'm not going to make that mistake if I ever reach that level, I'm going to be meticulous and be so organized with my project structure that if any other editor came in and sat down on my machine for any reason, they would be able to find everything as quickly as they would need to."

Cards on a Wall

Putting cards on the wall to represent scenes or shots or story beats is a technique probably most associated with famed editor Walter Murch. Organizing things in the NLE (editing program) is important, but keeping them straight in your mind sometimes requires a more obvious and inclusive visual prompt.

Tom Cross, Whiplash: I always work with picture scene cards on my wall. I know a lot of editors that do. With the representative frame from each scene, you can look at

the picture and instantly know what the scene is. You almost don't need the scene number. My assistant creates these cards in a Filemaker Pro layout. For me it's a road map for the entire movie and something I can look at to find my bearings. Directors and producers also like to use it to communicate their ideas and notes.

Hullfish: And is that stuff that's up on the wall—is that helping you in the scene itself or with the overall structure of the movie?

Tom Cross: They help me with the overall structure and remind me to think of the big picture. I believe that Walter Murch does a representative card for every **setup**. That's pretty amazing.

> **Setup**: A single camera position and lens choice. Most setups have several takes, then a new setup provides additional coverage. Scenes usually have multiple setups. Each setup is represented most commonly as a letter designation after the scene number on the slate.

Joe Walker, 12 Years a Slave: I do something similar. The first thing I do before the shoot starts is to write a very brief description of each scene on an index card and glue it onto a wall, so I can look and see the scene numbers and a short description. And that stays in the edit room so I can see at a glance where I am in the story. You have to have a superior knowledge of the story to fathom the continuity but also to know if the beats you need to hit have been hit. For example, the scene where Solomon is woken by Epps and told to play fiddle—you have to know that the last time we saw him he was whipped, so it would be painful for him to sleep on his back.

Project Organization

Hullfish: To handle the immense amount of footage on a film with the scale of Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation, what are some ways you organize the project—the bin structure—to allow you to find stuff?

Eddie Hamilton: It's very straightforward. It's broken down by sequentially numbered folders, so for example it would say:

- 01 Cutting Copy,
- 02 Scene Bins,
- 03 VFX,

- 04 Music,
- 05 Sound Effects,
- 06 Deliverables,
- 07 Graphics,
- 08 I usually have one at the bottom which is called Basement or Cave and then all my assistant's bins are in there—all the sync bins and the various **turnover** bins, and any toolbox things they've got.

> **Turnovers**: A turnover is when the editorial team prepares and outputs shots and sound for other departments downstream: VFX (visual effects), most notably, but also sound. Turnovers need to be carefully managed so that the other departments have the most recent version of the edit and the editor's timeline has the latest versions of VFX and sound.

But effectively you've got sequentially numbered folders. And if you look in the Cutting Copy bin, you've got the seven current cutting copy reels and underneath it it's got a cutting copy archive and in there I've got dated versions of every version of the movie that we've ever screened or exported for somebody, all listed by date. Then down in the scene bins I've got subfolders for scenes from 1 to 20, 21 to 40, 41 to 60, etc. and then in there you've got all the bins laid out, so it's very easy to find them. Then when I list all of the bins, one of my assistants on Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation had done something on another film that I'd never done. Scene 41 for example started at slate 41 and goes A, B, C, D, E, F and sometimes goes to AA and then AB, you would have several bins and previously I would do 41 part 1, part 2, etc., if it's a big action scene, but what he did which was quite clever: he would go 41A-G with slates A to G in that bin. Then 41H-M for example. So you could easily find the slate as well if you were looking for a particular slate.

I also always add an abbreviated description of the scene in there so it's easy to find. So it's that kind of stuff. You can find the **temp music** easily because it's all in the music bin and visual effects related stuff is in the visual effects folder and it's that kind of stuff to stay really kind of meticulously organized. I also don't like using all caps. I like using caps for the first letter and the rest lower-case. I find it easier to read. Easy on the eye. Nerdy stuff like that. I think if you're meticulous about it, it makes for a pleasurable experience day to day. Which, when you're living with something 12–14 hours a day for nearly a year, over time it all adds up.

Temp Music: Usually referred to as simply "temp." These are music tracks that have not been licensed for use in the film and are commonly pulled from the soundtracks of other movies. It is placed in the movie temporarily until it can be replaced with the final score from the composer. See the Music chapter for more detail.

Hullfish: Cheryl, The Martian was another project with a lot of footage and lots of turnovers for sound and VFX. How was the project organized?

Cheryl Potter, The Martian: Before you get to any folders, the top of the project is almost like a desktop of the computer, and we're very OCD about keeping it clean, so that the only bins that are at the top of the project are things that Pietro (Scalia, the editor) needs to see and needs to deal with. So every time we would prep new bins and new dailies, if these are brand new bins and he's never seen this before, they go to the top of the project. That way he knows he needs to cut them, and then when he's done cutting them, they get filed away in the Scene Bins folder. He's not the first person I've worked with that works like that. It's kind of cool to know that if there's a bin sitting at the top, you need to deal with it. And once you've dealt with it, you get to file it. And it was always this really nice feeling after he cut a bunch of scenes at the end of the day, and he'd look at the top of the project and go, "OK, I can file these now." And then it gets really nice and clean up there.

Then we're looking at the CUT folders. Initially it was a folder called CUTS, and inside that folder—when we were still cutting individual scenes—there would be an assemblies bin and a cut scenes bin. Once we had enough cut scenes, we created a set of REELS folders, and Pietro just guessed where the reels would break and how many there would be. When we started with the editor's cut, we had five reels. So there was a bin for each of the five reels. At that point, if we were missing a scene, we'd put in a placeholder for the missing scene. It was just a title saying what scene was missing with a brief description of the action in the scene.

Pietro has a numbering system with his cuts. The first version of the reels is EC1 for Editor's Cut 1, then go in numerical order from then to the point that it was screened for Ridley (director, Ridley Scott). And then the first version he edited with Ridley was called Director's Cut, and that's when we moved into the DC1, DC2, DC3 cuts. So you end up with an Editors Cut folder, a Director's Cut Folder, and then once we showed the studio, that's when we started using CUT. So CUT1 kicked in for the first version where we were addressing studio cuts.

Under the CUTS folders, we've got the **ADR** and Wild Tracks folder. Under the ADR and Wild Tracks was the ALL SCENES folder, and that's where we kept the scene bins. We also have folders inside the ALL SCENES bin so that when you open the folder you don't just get a list of 300 bins. So there was a sub-folder for scenes 1–20, 21–40, 41–60, etc. And we also had Visual Effects Scene bins, which was for any of the slates where they shot gray balls or reference for the visual effects houses, so that's not stuff that Pietro is going to cut with. But we needed to keep it someplace that was easy to find if we ever needed a clean plate or a crowd plate, so there's another set of scene bins, so first ALL SCENES, then ALL SCENES VFX. And the other thing after that is we have an "Archive by Topic" folder. We had a lot of reference material like proper NASA stock footage, or pre-viz for a whole lot of stuff, maybe we just wanted a different shot or a reference we could find reference of Earth, or the Hermes, or Mars, stills from NASA, stills of NASA, different images that had been created by the art department showing what the rover was going to look like or Pathfinder or any stock footage Pietro wanted us to lay out was to have one folder where we kept all of this reference material and have organized by what it is a reference of, so you have a bin for Earth. You have a bin for Mars. You have a bin for JPL. And that's what's next in the Project window.

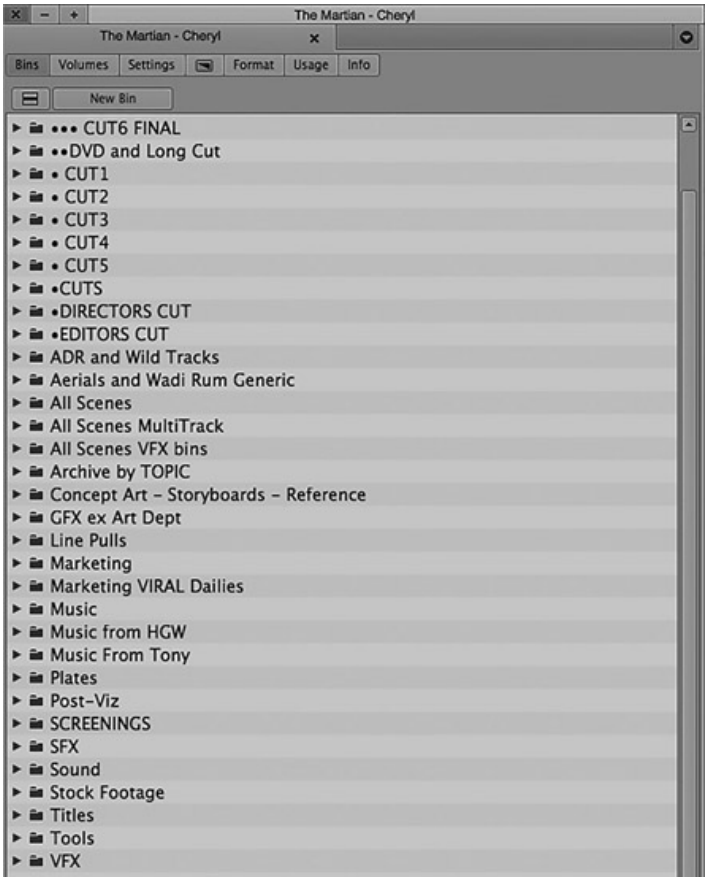


Image 1.1 Avid Project showing project organization for The Martian. Courtesy of Cheryl Potter.

ADR: Automated Dialogue Replacement. ADR is used to replace the voices of actors that were recorded on set with totally new, revised or better quality dialogue recordings made in an audio recording studio after the shoot.

Temp Comp: As VFX (visual effects) go through the process of being refined and approved, there are numerous versions of "temporary composites" or "temp comps," which are used—and must be tracked by version—until the final shot is complete.

Below that, more references, storyboards and **temp comps**. That folder is for us to be able to find stuff based on where we got it from. In a lot of ways it is a duplicate of the Archives by Topics bin. Pietro would refer to the Archive by Topics bin, and then if we needed to look for something by source, because we wanted to see everything we'd gotten from the art department, that's where we'd go. So sort of the same contents but sorted differently so you could find them quickly.

We also have a marketing folder, which is materials we received from marketing so when they were doing trailers and things, if we need to show the trailers to Ridley (Scott, director) for feedback or also the visual effects guys would look at the trailers and do breakdowns of them.

Then underneath marketing is Music, which is where we loaded Pietro's music library and then any libraries loaded specifically for The Martian. So the music folder is all of our reference music, then underneath the music folder is also music from HGW—Harry Gregson-Williams—our composer. So that's our proper score. And music from Tony Lewis, our music editor. So he was giving us some temp music tracks and music edits, so basically the three music folders just sit next to each other, and they contain library music, the final compositions and any music edits from the music editor.

Under music we have the **Plates** folder. We had a VFX unit go to Florida, and they shot a whole bunch of stuff for us of the Orion launch that happened in December. They shot that launch and a whole bunch of stuff around NASA, and a bunch of the stuff they shot for us made it into the film … a shot of Cape Canaveral, or a shot of the shuttle taking off. Technically they weren't really plates, but they weren't dailies either, and they weren't stock footage, since they'd been shot specifically for us.

Plate: A plate usually refers to a background image that was either shot or created and will have additional elements composited on top to create a finished VFX shot.

Under that was the **POST VIZ** folder. That's where we kept any of the post-viz that they did on set. They were all sorted by scene. We didn't really want the post-viz in with the dailies. We wanted them to have their own place to live, but it was really handy to have those to be edited in to the cut while we were working, because quite often the actual dailies were just someone on a green screen, whereas the post-viz was the live feed where they'd done a rough comp with the green screen comped over a background. So you could see that's where the ship's going to be, or that's what the framing's going to look like. The quality wasn't very good, but it was something better than just green screen.

Post-viz (or sometimes "post vis"): Temporary visual effects created after the scene was shot and used to tell the story and give a visual representation of a VFX shot before the actual shot is complete.

Under that was a folder of SCREENINGS. Any time we had to join up the whole film to view in Avid, we had a folder of those, and it was really handy if we ever needed to refer back to those if we had to reference "What was the version we had to do for so and so? And did it have this in it? Did it have that in it?" That was a very large bin because it had multiple sequences of the entire movie in it.

Under SCREENINGS we have our Sound Effects library folder, which is really big because Pietro has just about all of the libraries, and he likes to have them available. Bins for Hollywood Edge and Sound Ideas and all the various libraries. Also, some specific Martian sound effects. We were really lucky because we had our sound designer Oliver Tarney, who started very early in the production, but with a tiny team who were on the film from early on; before we even started production we got this care package of sound effects. They'd gone and found rover sounds and atmospheres that could work for the surface of Mars, and air conditioning noises and hums and just really nice atmospheres and things that were really very useful because we were able to create, "This is what the 'HAB' sounds like." So they'd given us all these ingredients to use instead of having to go through all these libraries. They'd given us these really great building blocks. So within the sound effects library was all this stuff Oliver and his crew had dug out for us, which was really a great starting point.

Hullfish: Beyond the Avid project, how was the team organizing dailies for Pietro?

Cheryl Potter: The script supervisor notes are an integral tool in the cutting room. We were lucky enough to have Annie Penn as our script supervisor—she is a regular collaborator with Ridley and one of the absolute best in the business. She would email us electronic script notes at the end of each shooting day—daily progress report, script notes per scene and a daily editors log. She would also create a lined script covering each day's scenes, which would get scanned at the production office and sent through to us the next morning.

Assistants Zoe Bowers and Elise Anderson would use Annie's notes and cross check with camera sheets when they were synching dailies to make sure we had everything. Printed takes would be marked in a bin column (to make them sortable), and their name in the bin would have an asterisk appended so Pietro could easily see the printed takes—e.g. 26A-1(C)*. Pietro always wanted all takes in the bin, since there are quite often gems in the non-printed takes—but this way he can quickly see which takes Ridley preferred on the day. Zoe and Elise would also input short shot descriptions, VFX and camera notes into bin columns so they existed in the Avid metadata, and we were able to export them into our Filemaker codebook database, which we used each day to make screening notes for the evening dailies screenings with Ridley. We'd also send screening logs to Fox for the executives to refer to when they viewed the dailies on PIX, or at the dailies theater at Fox. The Fox folk would only view printed takes, so we always needed Annie's notes promptly so we knew which takes to send/upload for them.

> **Slug**: A slug is usually a simple graphic with white text on a black background that is placed in the edit to stand in for a missing element, like a missing shot or VFX element or sometimes an entire missing scene.

Hullfish: Vashi, you were in Premiere for Deadpool. Talk to me about the project window and what was in it.

Vashi Nedomansky, Deadpool: Each project was different. Editor Julian Clarke just had the current stuff that was going on. It was honestly kept very simple. It was Current Cut, Sound Effects, VFX, Stills, **Slugs** … it was stuff everyone's seen. There was nothing crazy about it. We tried to keep stuff not floating around. It was the assistant's job to clean up Julian's project window at the end of the day because he's pulling in stuff from everywhere.

Scene Bin Organization

Hullfish: Billy, how do you like your scene bins organized?

Billy Fox, Straight Outta Compton: Basically, every scene is in its own folder. In terms of how I like my assistants to organize my world, I prefer to get media with just the one mix track instead of all of the **production sound**. My assistant sets it up so that if I'm editing along and I want to get back to the splits (split production tracks), I do a match-frame and match-frame again, and all of the other tracks appear. But I prefer not having all those tracks with me all the time. They just get in the way. It's kind of a pain. Another thing I enjoy having is that on each take, the start of performance has a marker. And if there is a pick-up, it will get a mark. I can look at the take and see how many versions are there and can quickly get to them.

> **Production Sound**: The audio that is recorded on set during the take.

Tom McArdle, Spotlight: I like the bin to be set up in a minimal way. I like to see just the slate names, plus maybe asterisks for the circled takes. I like to add in notes in my own shorthand regarding what's happening in the take and if it's incomplete, or whatever.

Dan Zimmerman, Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials: I was assisting for my dad (veteran editor, Don Zimmerman) once, and he said something to me that stuck and made sense. He said, "I want you to organize the film for me the way you would cut it or how you think I would cut it." So the traditional way of organizing it from wide shot to medium shot to main actor close-up to other actor close-up to insert in a bin stopped applying to me. I would read the script, and it would say, "Start on a close-up of the watch and pull back to reveal the big empty chasm of space." So I would start to organize it the way he would start to cut it. And that didn't mean cutting to the wide shot first, it would mean cutting to the watch first or starting on someone's eyes first. So I started organizing it based on the scene itself. My dad liked it, and I liked doing it like that, and it was a great way of organizing dailies and so I've taught my assistants to do it that way.

Hullfish: So, are you a Frame view guy with your bins? (see companion website for images)

Dan Zimmerman: I do like Frame view, and Premiere does a great job of Frame view because you can actually scrub within the clip inside the bin and actually make in and outpoints without having to load them into your Source window, which is kind

of interesting. When I get a big batch of visual effects that I'm looking at, I like looking at them in Script view because it will tell me what's new and what to look for, or what they're asking for me to look for within the shot, whether it's a preliminary layout or an animation change or whatever. I primarily use the Frame view because visually you know "that's the wide shot, so I'm going to go there."

Kelly Matsumoto, Star Trek Beyond: On Star Trek Beyond the assistants add an asterisk to the name under the clip, to signify that it's a selected take, and add any comments that Justin (director, Justin Lin) or the script supervisor makes to locators in the clip. They also add a colored locator if a take restarts within the clip.

Dylan Highsmith, Star Trek Beyond: The assistants build the bin in Frame view based on the lined script. It's as much as possible emulating looking at pages of lined script, especially if you are looking back and forth through script supervisor notes, and everything for the most part lines up.

Kelly Matsumoto: We group clips by camera setup with the master on top so that you can bounce between cameras, and then we put the A, B and C or whatever cameras below it vertically. So the master is at the top and then your **coverage**, and it goes down from there. If there's a setup that's shot late in the day that's an insert, that'll also go towards the top. If there are too many clips to fit into a window, especially with big set pieces, we break it up into different bins by beats/sections.

Hullfish: Joe, what about you? What's a scene bin look like?

Printed: A "printed" take is one that the director deems to be worth considering. In the "old days," because of the cost of film, only the best takes were printed to work prints for the editors to use. Non-printed takes were considered "B negative" and would only be printed if the editor requested it for additional material. In the current digital workflows, all takes are essentially "printed," but the best take or takes are still called "printed" takes.

Coverage: This term describes how the scene or script is "covered" or shot. Each line or section of a script is "covered" by various angles or setups that cover the scene in different ways. The coverage is what provides the editor with options and choices. For example, the coverage for a scene could include a wide shot, two over-the-shoulder shots, two close-ups and a dolly shot.

Joe Mitacek, Grey's Anatomy: In Frame view, in the bin's upper left-hand corner, I have take 1, 2 and 3 of the master on one row so it would be right next to each other. And then step down from that, you would have the A setup, and that's usually like an A/B cam, so, then it's kinda like a little pyramid, a little triangle. So, they'll have A on the left and B on the right. And then sitting around on top of those, like slightly above it, to form a little pyramid, that would be the group shot, and that's the one that I use to cut. And so that would be, you know, take 1, 2 and 3. And then, the B setup and then maybe C and D are just insert shots or something. I like it typically to be starting with the master in terms of setups. But sometimes what might happen is, if, in the middle of the scene they change blocking and they move to the other side of the room, so that the master shows all of that, but then A setup shows the first half of the scene, then the B setup shows Meredith (Grey's Anatomy lead character, Meredith Grey) on the other end of the scene of when she crosses the room and ends up somewhere else. I'll have them lay those out almost as separate scenes. I might adjust those around, so that the bin would start upper left: first the Master, then it would be Meredith's coverage for the first half, then Richard's coverage for the first half, then Meredith's coverage for the second half and then Richard. So it's kind of paired up against each other. Just little ways to keep things organized. It just brings a little bit of logic and order to the way that I am approaching it. Sometimes with a big scene, it's got a lot of little sub scenes within it.

Hullfish: How do your assistants prep scenes for you, Leo?

> "The difference between judging a performance on set and judging it in the editing room is often profound."

Leo Trombetta, Mad Men: I like to have everything that was shot available to me. My assistant will mark those takes that were considered "**printed**" and those that were the director's select takes. Sometimes the director will have more than one select take and, of course, those are the ones I'll go to first. However, the difference between judging a performance on set, with all the potential distractions and chaos, and judging it in the quiet of an editing room is often profound. Also, due to the advent of digital cinematography, even a relatively simple dialogue scene will often be covered by two, three and even four cameras. In these cases, I like to work in "group clips," where all the angles from the various cameras are linked together in one clip, making it possible to switch between angles with the touch of a key.

Tom Cross: Since I was an assistant for many years, I saw a lot of different approaches. I find that my methods kind of evolve with each picture. I try not to be so rigid

about how I do things, although I'm probably like a lot of other editors: just a little compulsive by default. I've always been a really visual person. I respond more to the visual rather than text. I like to work in Frame view and I have my assistant arrange the master clip frames in a horizontal row starting from left to right. Each row is a camera setup. If there are multi camera clips, they group clips in a certain way in the bin. I will have the script supervisor's notes next to me, but I like to have my assistant transfer some of the comments about each take into the name of the Avid clip. That's something I picked up from editor John Axelrad. At a glance it might look counter-intuitive and messy to some, but it actually helps me work more quickly. For me, I like to just focus on what's in the Avid. It allows me to become less dependent on the paperwork (script supervisor and sound notes) when I'm in the heat of cutting. My assistant abbreviates so that there isn't too much information polluting the name of the take.

> "The lined script is a graphic representation of how much coverage there is."

Hullfish: How do you set up the TV shows you've worked on, Kate? Boardwalk Empire? Vinyl?

Kate Sanford, Vinyl: Each episode has its own project, and within that I like to have each scene broken down into its own bin. I like to work in Frame view. I don't write any descriptions in the bin; I just like to look at the thumbnails. It helps me a lot. I like to sort of move the thumbnails around and think about them, and I also use the script a lot. I know a lot of editors don't care about the lined script. I love it. Again, it's another graphic representation for me to get an overall snapshot of how much coverage there is.

Mark Livolsi, The Jungle Book: I use text view on live action films because I like to organize the scenes and takes by their number and letter designations, but on Jungle Book, the shot names were technical numbers, and they were incomprehensible, so I went to thumbnail view to find shots visually.

Mary Jo Markey, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: I have the takes group clipped first (multi-cam). Then I have each individual camera separately shown lower in the bin, not group clipped. That's so I can quickly look and see, "Oh, in take 3 the B camera was doing something different than what the B camera was doing in take 2. And C camera was picking up little moments that he wanted to grab along the way." So I do like to have them shown separately along the way. I also have a locator placed in each take that's set at action. JJ (director, JJ Abrams) does a lot of pick-ups during a take

where he'll stop and say, "Can you do that line again?" And each one of those are marked with a locator. It's a big job actually to get all of that stuff set up. And doing all of that also helps the person who's doing the **ScriptSync** make sure that he doesn't miss any extra line readings and things when he's putting that together.

> **ScriptSync**: Avid's patented method of matching footage to a script so that you can edit from the Script instead of from clips in a bin. It allows the editor to see the coverage for each line in the script and instantly access a line by clicking on it in the script to call up the matching media. It looks similar to a script supervisor's lined script. See the end of this chapter for more on this.

Hullfish: Looking at Frame view?

Mary Jo Markey: I'm looking at Frame view most of the time. Occasionally on an action sequence, I'll go to Script view if I need to make detailed notes about something in the action sequence, but most of the time I'm looking at Frame view.

Maryann Brandon, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: I pretty much set up my bins like KEM rolls. I will have all of the A camera together, B camera together of a certain sequence. I will locate where each one starts so I can just whiz through them like when I used to cut on a KEM or a Moviola. I also have a set of grouped clips like Mary Jo where I can switch between cameras. But I pretty much use that in the big action sequences, but I use the **KEM rolls** because out of the blue JJ will change a C camera, and it will totally be shooting something else, and I like to be able to see the individual setups so that I don't miss anything. I mostly keep it all in Frame view in Avid. And I use the KEM rolls because it keeps the bins a little smaller so that I don't get overwhelmed by the amount of little tiles up there. I'll look at a Frame, and it'll be takes 1 through 25, and I think, "Oh this is going to be a big one."

> **KEM rolls**: A KEM is a brand of flatbed film editor (Keller-Elektro-Mechanik). A KEM roll is a series of takes edited into a group, so that multiple takes can be viewed sequentially and used as a combined source.

(LAUGHTER)

Image 1.2 This is a KEM flatbed film editor. Courtesy of KEM.

Mary Jo Markey: The other thing is we have B negative. I have all of the B negative lower in the bin so when I'm looking for something and I'm not finding quite what I want or I'm looking for a pronunciation of a word, I can also go down and look at all the B negative takes at the bottom of the bin. They're usually hidden, but I can just scroll down to the bottom of the bin and look at all of that as well.

It's a tremendous advantage having those at your fingertips. We both started on film, and if you felt like you didn't have what you were looking for, you'd need to order up **B negative** to be printed, and sometimes it was a big waste of money and there was nothing in the B negative, but it's fantastic to just have it there.

> **B negative**: In the days of editing from film prints, only the takes the director asked to have printed were printed and available for editing. B negative shots were footage that the editor had to request to be printed later in case the printed takes didn't work to complete the edit. In the digital age the B negative takes are simply the "non-preferred" takes.

Hullfish: I'm too much of a rookie. Printed takes and B negative, I just have all that stuff together with notations on which takes the director wanted "printed." I have the **scripty's** abbreviated notes put in to the name of the clip after the scene and take and setup info. Printed takes have asterisks. So I know the "printed takes," but I don't distinguish between the printed and non-printed.

Scripty: This is an abbreviated term for the script supervisor, who prepares the production notes and lines the script on set, among other duties. Some script supervisors view "scripty" as pejorative, so be careful! But it is commonly used.

Mary Jo Markey: Oh … that's a good thing.

Hullfish: Mike, how do you have your assistants lay out the scene so it helps you the best?

Mike Hill, In the Heart of the Sea: I like Frame view, and they set it up so that it is pretty much in script continuity order with pick-ups at the end. Sometimes I go to the text view, and I'll put in some notes for myself, and I can look at the frame and get familiar with that and know where I have to go when I'm looking for a shot.

Dan Hanley, In the Heart of the Sea: I'm a Frame view guy because Frame view to me is like Cliff Notes. You get a visual right there. I like the assistants to have the Frame view of the various takes show a chronological look from the beginning of the scene to the end of the scene, so that when I look up quickly, I remember, "Oh yeah. That's the shot where they did that pick-up." I'll change the thumbnail reference frame sometimes as I'm going through, if I see something that looks a little better to me or something I want to have as a reminder. I like the bins setup: close-ups in one bin, mediums in another, or one actor in one bin and another actor in another bin. I'd rather toggle through bins than scroll up and down a giant bin. I know guys who throw stuff all in one bin and just scroll through it, but I'd rather have five small bins with decent sized frame views; it's always the quickest way for me to remember where the coverage is.

Hullfish: How are you looking at bins in the Avid?

Tom McArdle: I just use a simple text view. The less mess the better.

Hullfish: Just organized by how they were slated?

"A lot of editing is simply a process of organizing and narrowing down your options."

Tom McArdle: Yeah. Sometimes I'll break up my footage into numerous bins. If there's just too much footage for a scene, I'll break it up by characters, or by wide

shots versus the tighter coverage, or sometimes I'll break it up by the early part of the scene versus the later part of the scene. I just find if a bin's too big, it's just too hard to work with. A lot of editing is simply a process of organizing and narrowing down your options.

Hullfish: Describe to me how you like your bins set up.

Sidney Wolinsky, House of Cards: I like them full frame. And I usually like everything set up alphabetically. I'm not that wild about special organizations. That's pretty much it. Depending on how much material there is, my assistant will organize it where each line will be a setup, but if there's too much material, I say, "Just fill the whole screen and make sure it goes left to right, and I'll figure out where the setups start and end."

Hullfish: One bin per scene, I'm assuming.

Sidney Wolinsky: That's the ideal, even if they have to be pretty small clips, because I don't like scrolling up and down. I like to see it all at once. Frame view in Avid using the first frame of action. Though when I have a B camera or multiple cameras in a grouped clip, I like to see the slate, so that stands out, and then individual cameras after that.

Hullfish: What specifically did they do to prepare the bins for Pietro?

Cheryl Potter: Setting a thumbnail was done on general action. Pietro wasn't into having locators for action or slate. But he would like a locator if there was a reset. So we tended to only put locators on the rushes themselves if they came back and did a lot of resets so you could see how many different restarts they did in a take. Those we would mark with locators so it was easy to skip through them. Editor Chris Lebenzon does the locator on action, I remember, but Pietro doesn't do that. He works in frame mode and likes the bin to be arranged so that it fills the screen nicely. He doesn't like having to scroll. So if you've got enough clips in the bin that you're going to scroll, you'd start a new bin for that scene.

One of the things I impressed on the assistants was that if you have four takes of a setup (the same angle in a scene), then try to make sure to make the thumbnails all look very similar so that when you're looking for the same take in the bin, your eye would see that all those thumbnails looked similar.

> “One of the ways we organize things is to have ‘Archive by Topic’ bins.”

Of the editors I know of, I can only think of one text view person, and that was Dody Dorn (editor of Fury, Memento, and Matchstick Men). She was a text view person.

One of the ways we organize things is to have “Archive by Topic” bins: we had all this material, and we were just organizing it by where it came from—stock footage, reference, Google image searches, because that’s the way we’d normally do it. But Pietro was just like “I want to open just one bin and see all the Earth reference.” So we organized it like that, and it was so simple, but it made it so easy to find everything.

Hullfish: What’s your personal favorite way to look at a bin?

Cheryl Potter: I’m a thumbnail girl all the way. When you’re cutting and you’re looking for other versions, it’s just easy to see. I’m very visual. All of the clips need to be sized to fit on the screen at the same time. Chris Lebenzon’s a scroller though. He wants every thumbnail as big as possible.

Hullfish: I’m the hybrid. I use text view with a big thumbnail. Even though that meant I couldn’t see all of the clips on the screen at the same time, I wanted to be able to see all of the notes and comments that I’d made for the clip. With thumbnail view, you don’t see anything but the image and maybe a little of the scene and take info.

> “Edit all setups for each section of the scene in a line to quickly review all options.”

Joe Walker: I’ve got a pretty simple method. I like to view the bin in thumbnail view with each setup placed in a row. Each take of that setup goes horizontally across the bin, the next setup in a row below that and so on. And then if the scene has a lot of footage, for example: the office scene at the beginning of Sicario, where they ran a long scene over and over—for that, I’ll ask my assistant for a pre-edit. Some editors go crazy and do every line. (Making a string-out of every single take of every single line.) That’s too detailed for me. I’ll just go through the script and break the scene into 30 or 40 second chunks. My assistant then takes all the various setups for each chunk and edits them in a line. That way I can quickly review all of the options; it just helps for those very complicated high coverage scenes. Sometimes you’re fishing to

see which shot size you want to be on any particular moment. Once you start the edit, your pre-edit becomes less and less important. The fact that you've gone in to the close-up and you want to stay with the close-up lessens your need to review all the medium shots. But for the most part I won't use pre-edits.

Mark Yoshikawa, The Hunger Games: Mockingjay—Part 2: I also work in Frame view. Prior to working with Alan, I worked in a very similar way. It was very easy to adapt to that system with the grouped clips and with them all laid out in Frame view, usually in shooting order. I rely on markers inside the clips of the film for notes. The assistants will put the five takes with different thumbnails, so you can see how the shot develops throughout the take itself. So it was very similar and easy to jump back and forth, but we kept our own bins so Alan didn't see all my crazy markers everywhere.

Jake Roberts, Brooklyn: I like to have the dailies lined up in the bin in the Frame setting (thumbnails) and have them run horizontally across, staggered through the takes so that you see the first frame in the first take and by take 7, if that's how many takes there are, you have an image of the last frame.

I learned that staggered method from an assistant editor a few films ago. Until that point I wasn't using Frame mode (Frame view is Avid's version of "thumbnails") at all. I was using Text mode (Avid's version of List view) because of my documentary background. Looking at Frames often doesn't help much. You have to work off a text description. The assistant said, "You're crazy! Why don't you work with the Frame view?" So she showed me that way of working, and that's been the way I've worked. Magpie-like, I just pick up things here and there.

Hullfish: How do your assistants prepare the movie for you?

Fred Raskin, The Hateful Eight: Number one, they make sure that everything is in sync and that includes off-speed material. As you've seen from the movie, there is some slow motion stuff where the dialogue is in sync. And so it was up to them to figure out how to re-speed the audio to get it to match, and then I have a particular bin set up that I like that basically allows me to see the way the scene will play out visually right in front of me. I'll start out with wide shots and then, for example, if it's a dialogue scene between two characters, I'll have one character's dialogue on the left side of the bin and the other's on the right. And going down from wides, to mediums to tights. And so I can just kind of look at the bin and get a pretty good sense of how this scene is going to play out. When we get into more complex camera moves, then it becomes a little more about making sure these bins follow the order of the shots as lined in the script.

Scene Bin Organization With JPEG Markers

Hullfish: How do you like to have your Avid projects and your bins set up?

Alan Bell, The Hunger Games: Mockingjay—Part 2: I use Frame view and I have all my clips grouped together as clips. So the top row will be A camera. The bottom row will be B camera, and then my grouped clips will be sort of in between over to the right. I have multiple bins for a scene because I never want to scroll down the bin. So when I open up the bin full screen on one monitor, I can see all the material in that bin, and I can see it kind of like a film-strip, so if there's eight takes, the first clip's thumbnail is of a frame early in the take and the last clip is parked somewhere near the end, so I can look at all the clips for the scene and see, "Oh, that's where she walks from the desk to the hovercraft. Or, that's the medium shot that turns into a two shot." And I have another bin that just has a bunch of still-frame JPEGs that are all color coded and have words and arrows and things, and as I take notes and watch the dailies in the bin, I'll throw these cards underneath the clips that I like, so when I look at the clip, I can see the green one, take 3 is the one I like the best, or maybe it's a card where the right side of the card is green and the left side of the card is black, so when I look at that I can see that it's a sequence where I like the second half of the take. And that's kind of how I do it.

Hullfish: And the JPEGs are defining or giving you visual notes that help define the clips above them? (see the companion website for screenshots of this technique)

Alan Bell: Yeah. Sometimes I'll have JPEGs, like on a huge sequence, it will say "Gale" or "Katniss," and I'll have all of Katniss' stuff. Some of the big action sequences, I like to have them in the order of how the takes appear in the script, but in big action scenes it's nonsensical. So I'll divide them up by character or acts of scenes, and part of how I get familiar with the footage is that my assistants set it up for me and then I re-arrange it to my liking, and that's how I get to know the footage.

Hullfish: And your assistants make these JPEGs from your notes from the dailies screenings?

Alan Bell: No. I make them myself. I have a big bin of JPEGs that I've made and I use. The JPEGs are just color coded symbols. The notes actually appear on locators inside the takes.

Kelly Matsumoto: We did the same thing on Star Trek Beyond. I got that idea from Tom Cross. I worked with him just before Trek, and what he did was put these little Post-It looking clips in the bins.

Steven Sprung, Star Trek Beyond: It's a little still frame tile that sits right with the other clips in the bin and has a message like "Take Missing" in yellow if there's no take 8, and it goes from 7 to 9.

Dylan Highsmith: Or they would put a Post-It that said, "See notes" and you would know that there was a director's note specifically on that take that would require reading. Or they would line it up and have a note that said, "A cam, B cam, C cam." They would just take JPEGs, and the assistants had a blast with creating fun or Star Trek-y looking JPEGS. Every time you looked up at the Frame view, you could see these labels.

Steven Sprung: And if new takes would come in for a scene that was shot a few weeks later, then you would see a little yellow Post-It with a red "New!" and you would see the new takes there.

Dylan Highsmith: When you're keeping up with camera, simply seeing that when you open up the bin for scene 92A part 2, there's just this one section that's new, and you know that everything else you looked at before. Very helpful.

Selects or KEM Rolls

Cheryl Potter: Once the syncing was done, scene bins were prepped in Frame view arranged in the order he liked for them to be arranged in, and a KEM roll generated.

Hullfish: Talk to me about project organization. How do your assistants prepare and organize the film? Project organization, bin organization?

Job Ter Burg, Elle: I think I have a rather traditional way of organizing, with daily bins for picture, sound and synced clips, plus folders with bins per scene, that I work from. I like to create a sequence with all the footage for a scene, then review that, adding markers where I want to make a note, or sometimes I'll add notes to the script reports. It's important to record your first impressions somehow. And sometimes, many weeks later, you can go back to that sequence and quickly browse through it to check there's nothing missing that you originally liked. I'll usually assemble the scene from that sequence as well, and keep the first cut of each scene in its scene bin, and then create a cutting copy sequence from those cut scenes.

Hullfish: And how are bins set up?

Billy Fox: I like Text view. Sometimes I keep it in Frame view, but I find that's more of a pain. I used to use this technique: I would go through every take, and I would lit-

erally do a performance cut, the same single line over and over from every setup and take. It was the most incredibly time-consuming thing. Lately I don't do that anymore.

Hullfish: You would do that? Everybody I've ever talked to hands that off to an assistant.

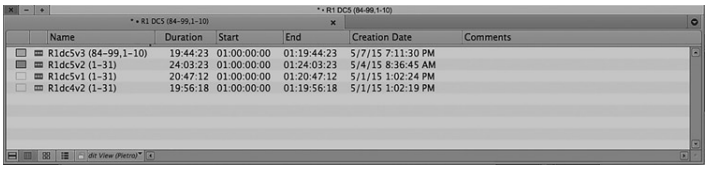
Billy Fox: No. I would do it.

Hullfish: What?! You gotta delegate, man!

Sequence Organization

It's not just about keeping track of footage, but keeping track of the edits and revisions and the many ways that the movie has been delivered and how to track approvals and notes from the studio and others. That can be a lot harder than it sounds, especially when you're working very quickly.

Pietro Scalia, The Martian: It's really about how you keep track of the latest cut. What are your naming conventions? I just happen to use whatever I've learned from the films I've been on and how those cutting rooms were organized. For me, it's proved to be a solid system and a simple one. A simple one that you can alter and change according to your own needs.



Name	Duration	Start	End	Creation Date	Comments
R1dc5v3 (84–99,1–10)	19:44:23	01:00:00:00	01:19:44:23	5/7/15 7:11:30 PM	
R1dc5v2 (1–31)	24:03:23	01:00:00:00	01:24:03:23	5/4/15 8:36:45 AM	
R1dc5v1 (1–31)	20:47:12	01:00:00:00	01:20:47:12	5/1/15 1:02:24 PM	
R1dc4v2 (1–31)	19:56:18	01:00:00:00	01:19:56:18	5/1/15 1:02:19 PM	

Image 1.3 Bin of versions of timelines for Reel 1 of The Martian. Each is carefully numbered and dated.

Eddie Hamilton: As an editor on a large movie, or on ANY movie, you are responsible for a huge investment, and you must make sure you have the best film possible that exists within the dailies, and that means trying everything out. It's a joy being able to archive every single cut of every single scene because quite often you do over-trim things to get the film down to its running time. Then you discover that some of the heart of the film is gone. So you need to go back, let the scenes breathe a little more. And quite often when I get to the end of a cut, I will want to go back and look at some of the selects reels and make sure that I have all the best stuff in there, and being able to call sequences up at a second's notice and review them calmly while you're eating lunch or taking a breather is worth its weight in gold.

> "The majority of editors are fairly anal retentive and fastidious."

Hullfish: That's one of the other reasons why it pays to be organized. Do you find yourself with any special project management things? Do you worry about the different versions of things you've cut?

Jake Roberts: I should be more careful. I get very blinkered when I'm working, and if I get a new idea, I'll just start making changes on the master, and I'll realize I never saved the original, so I try as much as possible to keep a coherent index of old versions so you can just jump back. But I'm not a great housekeeper …

Hullfish: Me neither. That's one of the things I need to get better at myself.

Jake Roberts: Probably the majority of editors are fairly anal retentive and fastidious.

Organizing a Timeline Layout

Another key organizational aspect of editing is the timeline itself. This is especially important for editing projects that are shared between multiple editors because the use of tracks should be understood by all of the editors and agreed upon. These track choices are also important as turnovers, deliverables and on-line approach. Each track may have a purpose in the versioning of turnovers, and having a logical approach to audio and video tracks in a sequence will greatly improve collaboration between departments.

As an example of how an editing team may lay out the timeline tracks, Cheryl Potter of The Martian explains their methodology.

Cheryl Potter: A1–3—Production dialogue. The production dialogue tracks are muted at the track level, since we generally monitor the cleaned up dialogue stem, but when Pietro goes back into a scene, he will mute the stem, unmute A1–3 and cut with the production dialogue, then afterwards Laurence would clean up the tracks, and any section that we didn't have a dialogue stem for, he would cut in production dialogue onto tracks A5–6, so that once A1–3 go back to being muted, you'd hear dialogue stem for as much as possible, and just production sound for the bit that we had no stem for. The timeline described below is available on the book's companion website.

- A4—Mono dialogue stem from sound.
- A5–6—(currently empty) but as described above would carry production sound for any bit we had no stem for.
- A7—Mono sound FX stem from sound.
- A8—Mono foley stem from sound.
- A9–A12—(currently empty) but this is where we'd put in any of our library sound FX for sections where we had no SFX stem. Back in the original editor's cut days, these tracks were all full of our sound work with our temp FX library, but now that we have a full mix, the tracks are empty!
- A13—Stereo atmosphere/background stem from sound. It's good to have the backgrounds separate from the spot FX in the stems for cutting.
- A14—Stereo music stem from sound—the music as mixed on the stage, with any music edits baked in.
- A15—(currently empty) but this was a second track for music, since you usually need two when cutting so you can go between different pieces of MX (music).
- A16—There is no A16. We don't use it since there is a weird bug in V7 that, while in direct out mode, it will sometimes patch A16 to tracks 1–2 even when you actually want them to come out tracks 7–8, which meant it would come through with our dialogue, so we just stopped using it.
- A17—Original music files (muted). This is where we'd carry the original versions of the music, so the original un-edited source tracks, or Harry's demos. We carry them here so that if while Pietro is cutting he needs to go back to the full version of a track because he's extended a scene and needs more length, or needs to re-edit the music, it's just there, so he can lift it up onto one of the monitored tracks and cut with it. The blue clips are Harry's score, the yellow and purple clips are source music tracks.
- A18—LTRT mix (muted)—this was only just added at the very end. It's a straight two channel version of the full mix, which is handy for us to have for outputs. This wasn't put into the reels until after Pietro was done with them; he wouldn't usually have this in his cutting version.
- And video tracks (you may want to refer to the more zoomed-in Reel 1 timeline for this).
- V1–V5—Edit layers. Stereo dailies are uncolored (so dark blue in Pietro's settings), mono dailies are gray, VFX finals are bright green, mono VFX finals are dark green, purple is for stereo shots (either triaged or post converted). You'll

notice the mono dailies and mono VFX finals all have a purple post-converted version above them. Pink is for titles and graphics.

- V6—The 2D grade, as received back from Company 3
- V7—The 3D grade, as received back from Company 3 (yep, they have to do two different grades for the two different versions)—FYI V6 and V7, Pietro would not usually have the grade cut in during his cutting period, these were added at the end to help us with outputs and for archiving purposes. So usually V6 and V7 would just be more cutting layers for Pietro.
- V8—Our mask. FYI our original dailies we received with the mask baked in, which was helpful for cutting and making dailies outputs, but when we up-rezed the footage from DNX36 to DNX115, we had Fluent supply the up-rezed clips without the mask so that 1. we could easily see the shot had been up-rezed and 2. we had flexibility to do re-racks if desired.
- V9—Titles layer for VFX titles. This layer was maintained by our VFX editor, Richard Ketteridge. Every VFX shot would have a simple title sitting above it carrying its shot number and a locator, above the mask layer (so generally was not being viewed by Pietro, he would view from the mask layer down). The title color and locator color indicated if the shot had been turned over. Having the title there meant you could easily monitor that layer when doing reviews/outputs so you could see the shot number. It was also helpful for Pietro to see what shots were VFX and if they had been turned over.
- V10—Titles layer for stereo titles. This layer was maintained by our second assistant, Paolo Buzzetti. Every stereo shot (so every non-VFX shot) needed to be sent for triage, and any mono dailies shots needed to be sent for post-conversion. These titles did the same job as the VFX titles, but for the stereo shots, carrying their stereo ID and indicating if they'd been turned over. Having the two sets of titles on separate layers not only meant they could be maintained separately, but it also made it easy to see what sections of the film were VFX and what were stereo.

Hullfish: I have been very careful with timeline layouts for the larger projects I've edited.

The companion website has an image of a final locked cut of War Room. All of the video—unless there are composites or split screens—have been simplified down to a single track. The layout of the audio tracks are that the production tracks are **checkerboarded** and layered on tracks 1–4. Sound effects and ambiences (room tone) are on tracks 5–8. Music tracks are checkerboarded on tracks 9–12. All of these tracks are

dual mono tracks. I should have used stereo tracks, but we had a lot of footage brought in as dual mono, and I opted not to change them mid-way through post.

> **Checkerboarded**: The act of editing audio tracks so that the sounds are spread over multiple tracks and overlapped, creating seamless transitions

In the "WarRoomcheckerboarded" timeline available on the companion website, my organization was much cleaner. Video is mostly limited to a single track unless layering or split screens are needed. There are also tracks for English Title Tool (Chyron/lower thirds) that could be eliminated for international versioning and a track for burn in timecode for various deliverable requirements and producers' screenings. I used the Avid functionality of renaming numerical audio tracks with practical track names, which really helped on this project, which had a revolving group of additional and assistant editors who all needed to know exactly where certain tracks needed to go. The first two audio tracks are production tracks directly from the lav and boom mics used to record the interviews. I did not checkerboard the tracks, but left both mics in the timeline with the lav muted. That way the audio team had easy access to the mic if they needed it later. The third and fourth audio tracks are for audio coming from archival sources or for sync sound from b-roll shots. Tracks 5 and 6 are for sound effects or nat sound, which has been ducked (attenuated under the main audio track at that moment). Track 7 is for voice over, essentially. Tracks 8 and 9 are stereo tracks of checkerboarded temp music. All temp has been removed in this sequence in preparation for score.

There are several timelines from Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation on the companion website. The code name for the movie during production was Taurus, and there are numerous screengrabs from the movie, courtesy of Eddie Hamilton. Note the detailed track layout. Many of these tracks are tracks that had been turned over to other departments, like VFX or sound, and the timeline includes both the original tracks sent out and the new VFX or mixes returned.

ScriptSync

While not every feature film or dramatic TV editor edits in Avid, probably 95 to 99% of feature films and script-based television (as opposed to reality TV) is edited on Avid (as of the writing of this book). In 1996 Avid introduced a scene organization and footage access method that is unique to Avid. It was originally available on an NLE called EditFlex, from whom Avid acquired the patent.

The method entails importing the text of the script into Avid and then linking footage to the script in a very similar way to the method that a script supervisor lines a script on the set. When the footage is prepared and linked in this way, the editor can access any line in the movie by clicking on the corresponding line in the script. Media Composer will load the footage into the source monitor and place the locator (and an in-point) at the beginning of the specific line. On long takes or on takes with multiple resets, this is a huge time saver. All footage for a scene can be accessed directly from the script inside Media Composer. It is not necessary to have any bins open to locate, load or access footage.

The other benefit of the ScriptSync feature is as a visual organizational prompt. An editor can easily see what coverage there is for a specific line or section of a scene at a glance inside Media Composer instead of having to refer first to the paper lined script created on set, choosing the take, finding it in a bin, then finding the line in the take.

When Avid originally implemented this feature, it was not called ScriptSync. It was called Script Integration. Initially, using Script Integration meant that after matching a take to the portion of the script that it covered, an assistant editor would also have to manually mark the beginning of each line in the script. Obviously this was a fairly time-consuming task.

In May of 2007, Avid teamed with a speech recognition company called Nexidia to improve Script Integration and rename it ScriptSync. This new technology allowed Avid to compare the audio waveforms in the clip to a known phonetic dictionary of words (in multiple languages) and automatically sync every word in the script to the exact moment the word is spoken in the clip. This improved the accuracy of the tool and vastly decreased the amount of time it took for an assistant to prepare a Script for use.

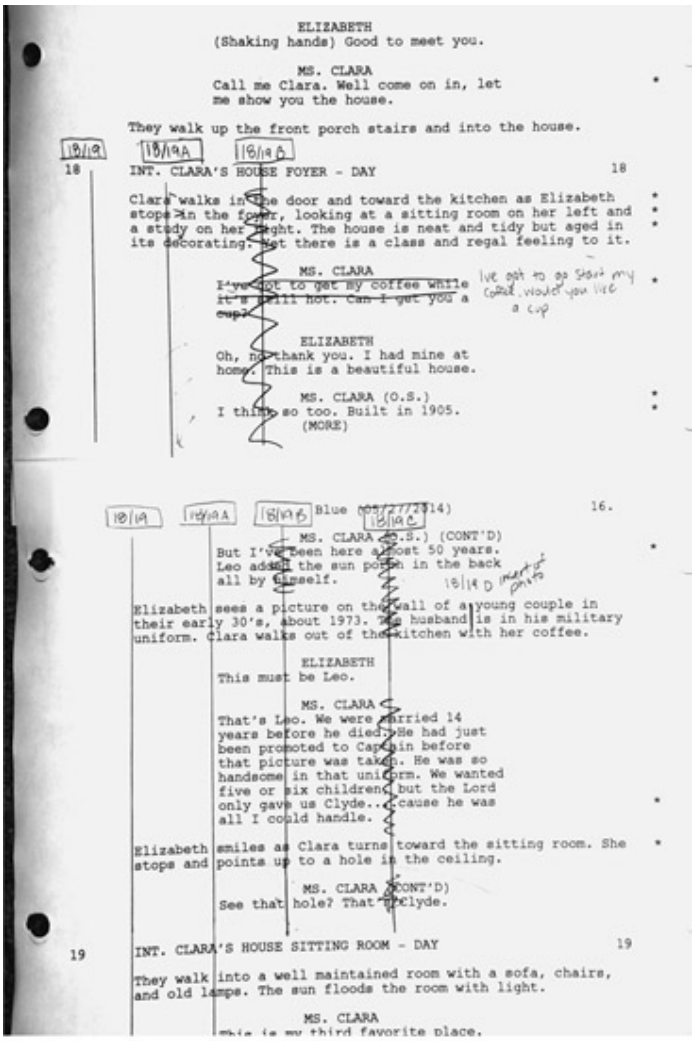
> “Script Integration and ScriptSync look identical, so editors sometimes use the terms interchangeably.”

In 2014, at the release of Media Composer 8.0, the ScriptSync functionality was lost for a few point releases, due to licensing issues. A return of the phonetic syncing feature was negotiated in the fall of 2016 and is expected to return in 2017.

Other than the ability to phonetically sync the clips with the script, Script Integration and ScriptSync look and operate identically, so editors sometimes use the terms inter

changeably. To an editor, they are essentially the same, but an assistant editor will definitely know the difference!

Job Ter Burg: I'm a huge fan of Avid's script-based editing and ScriptSync, especially on more complex dialogue scenes. There's a pivotal Christmas sequence in Elle, where nearly all



ELIZABETH
(Shaking hands) Good to meet you.

MS. CLARA
Call me Clara. Well come on in, let me show you the house.

They walk up the front porch stairs and into the house.

18/19 18/19A 18/19B

18 INT. CLARA'S HOUSE FOYER - DAY 18

Clara walks in the door and toward the kitchen as Elizabeth stops in the foyer, looking at a sitting room on her left and a study on her right. The house is neat and tidy but aged in its decorating. Yet there is a class and regal feeling to it.

MS. CLARA
I've got to get my coffee while it's still hot. Can I get you a cup?

I've got to go start my coffee, would you like a cup

ELIZABETH
Oh, no thank you. I had mine at home. This is a beautiful house.

MS. CLARA (O.S.)
I think so too. Built in 1905.
(MORE)

18/19 18/19A 18/19B Blue 05/27/2014) 16.

18/19C

MS. CLARA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
But I've been here almost 50 years. Leo added the sun porch in the back all by himself.

18/19 D insert of porch

Elizabeth sees a picture on the wall of a young couple in their early 30's, about 1973. The husband is in his military uniform. Clara walks out of the kitchen with her coffee.

ELIZABETH
This must be Leo.

MS. CLARA
That's Leo. We were married 14 years before he died. He had just been promoted to Captain before that picture was taken. He was so handsome in that uniform. We wanted five or six children, but the Lord only gave us Clyde... cause he was all I could handle.

Elizabeth smiles as Clara turns toward the sitting room. She stops and points up to a hole in the ceiling.

MS. CLARA (CONT'D)
See that hole? That's Clyde.

19 INT. CLARA'S HOUSE SITTING ROOM - DAY 19

They walk into a well maintained room with a sofa, chairs, and old lamps. The sun floods the room with light.

MS. CLARA
this is my third favorite place.

Image 1.4 This image is two partial pages from the script of War Room as "lined" by the Script Supervisor, Kara Tolley. Courtesy of Kendrick Brothers Films.

the characters in the film are present, which I think ran for 12 pages. It was broken up into various scenes in various corners of the house and was quite complex. Having all the footage for that scene in a script in Media Composer gave me the best overview and instant access to any on-screen or off-screen reading of any line. I'm a fan of that technique; I've used it on many films, and I'm really disappointed that Avid hasn't been able to make a deal on licensing it again with Nexidia for V8. It's why I cut this film on V7.

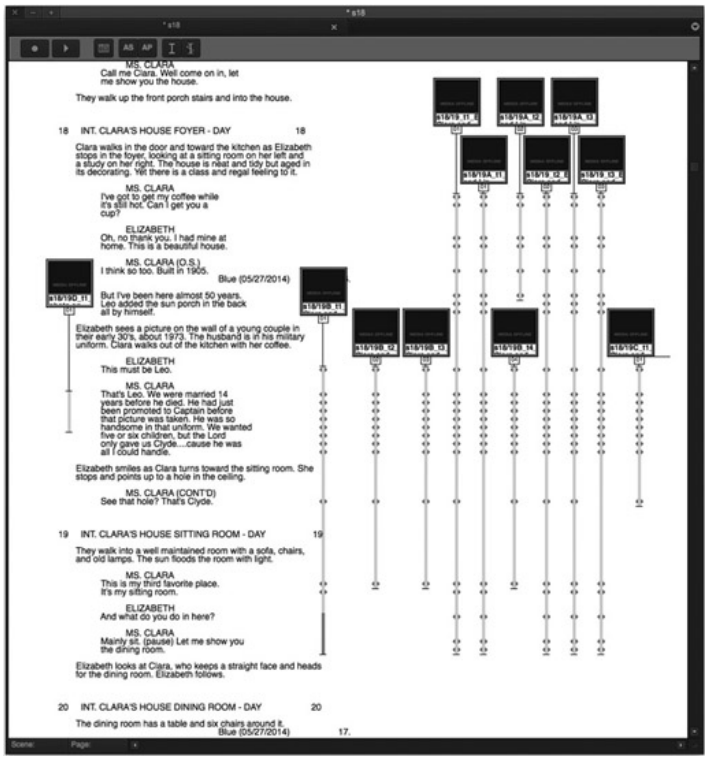


Image 1.5 This is an Avid ScriptSync page from the movie, War Room. This covers the same scene as the lined script in the previous image. Courtesy of Kendrick Brothers Films.

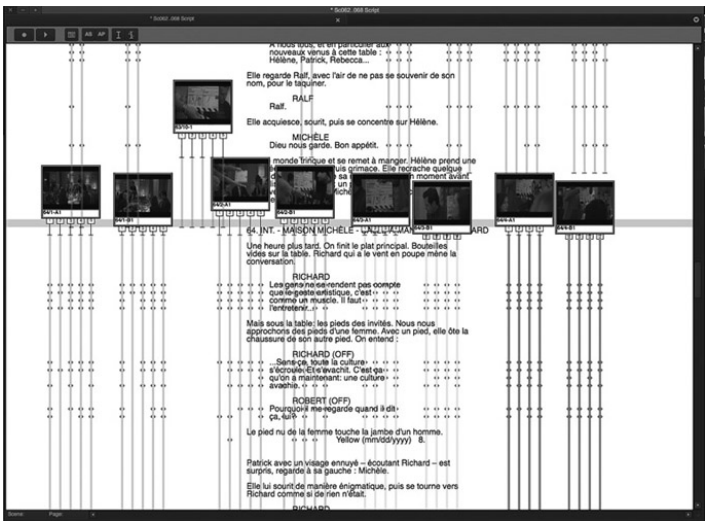


Image 1.6 A ScriptSynced page from Elle. Courtesy of Job ter Burg.

Dylan Highsmith: We used the Avid script based editing on Star Trek Beyond, which is something that Steven brought from his experience in television. This was the first time we've used it on a Justin film.

Hullfish: ScriptSync?

Beat: A beat has several meanings in film. In this case, scenes can be broken into separate beats. These are sometimes moments of action or decision or revelation. In the larger structure of the story, this often refers to act breaks or large turning points in the story, such as the introduction of a main character. It can also refer to a pause in action or dialogue.

Steven Sprung: Not ScriptSync. It's manually scripted by the assistants. They go take by take and put markers where we ask them to, usually at the top of every line of dialogue, and then at major lines of action. If there's a long passage of dialogue, we'll have them mark it at multiple places throughout an entire speech. Script-based editing makes it very easy to jump around and look for alternate readings of a certain line. This is especially useful now in the digital age where a single take is not a single take anymore. Sometimes it has four restarts and three additional **pick-ups** of various lines or **beats**. On the Avid script, you can see it laid out on the script visually, and it makes it instantly clear what you've got to work with.

Pick-up: A shot or line that is "picked up" after a full take is complete. Possibly an entire take was good except a single line, so instead of re-doing the entire take, they will "pick-up" just the bad line.

Sidney Wolinsky: Right. They just say, "Go back to the first position" and start going again. And then when you have ScriptSync, they can break those takes apart and actually see the second iteration of the take and that can be color coded so it pops out.

Dylan Highsmith: Especially when the director is in the room, it's such a great tool to just pull up and bounce through alternate readings. On the Fast and Furious films, with two units and the sheer amount of film that was coming through, we just never had time to do it.

Steven Sprung: Plus, on an action movie you don't really need it as much. The action sequences generally don't require scripting. Each take is generally confined to one or more action beats, and they will mostly cut the camera at the end. You don't need script-based editing for that. It's in the more complex dialogue scenes that you really want it.

Hullfish: I was going to ask you about that, because on the last feature that I cut, we only had one assistant. She didn't have enough time to do every scene, so we said,

"Okay, here are the 10 most complex dialogue scenes, just do these." You blow off the simple ones, and you blow off the action ones.

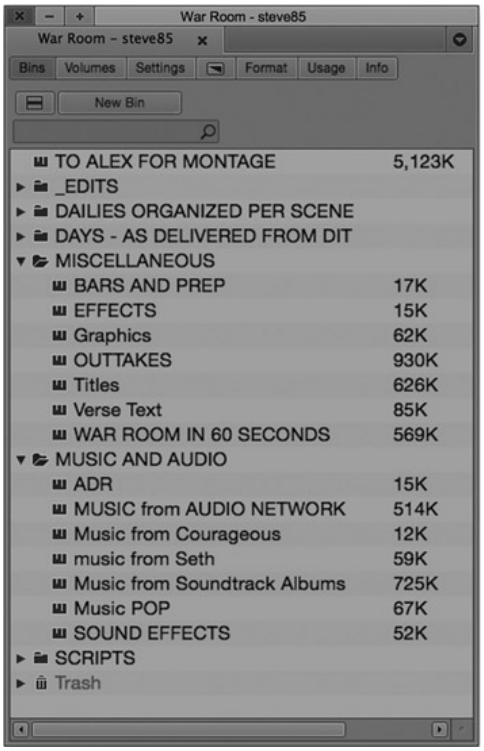


Image 1.7 Avid Project Window from War Room with folder of Scripts.

Dylan Highsmith: Right, even with four assistants, there was a lot of footage coming from the set every day, and we were always pressed for time, so we prioritized which scenes were most important to script right away and which scenes could wait until later. That way we would at least have it when Justin was in the cutting room. I think it worked out really well.

Steven Sprung: I started using it on Arrested Development because that was the first show I'd worked on that was shot digitally. The directors took advantage of this freedom and would do all kinds of restarts and pick-ups and wouldn't cut the camera for 10 minutes. So I found it really necessary to start using the script based editing. I haven't looked back since.

Hullfish: That's interesting. There are a couple people I have talked to, who have edited Glee or edited Big Bang Theory or Friends, and they said on those shows that are really improv, they find the ScriptSync or Script Integration harder to take advantage of because of the improv.

Steven Sprung: Yeah, in the case of improv, you really have to come up with another method.

Kelly Matsumoto: Because of how time consuming scripting is, one assistant mainly dealt with it while the others concentrated on dailies.

Hullfish: Brent, tell me about your approach to a scene. With as much improv that you have to deal with in these comedies, maybe it's different than the approach other editors have to take.

Brent White, Ghostbusters: There's a lot of material that you have to weed through. In my cutting room we use Script Integration, and every take is put on the script inside of Avid. Every line is lined up so I can get to it, and with improv I am able to notate and find each little element in its separate beat. So what happens is that you have a scene, and it has several joke beats or ideas that you're trying to work through, and what I do with Judd and several of these other guys are versions, and you can see how long the scene can go and sustain itself or you can cut each idea.

Hullfish: So, the improv doesn't affect the usability of Script Integration for you? It's still a valuable tool?

Brent White: Because I'm working with Judd and Adam and Paul, who have a finite amount of time in the cutting room, for me to be able to find that moment that he's looking for in the fastest possible way—it takes a fair amount of time, and I've got a pretty big staff that do all of that stuff before I sit in the edit chair so that when I sit down with a director I can find things quickly. Because he'll remember from on set, "What about this joke? Or what about THIS joke?" And me being able to find it super-fast is a huge bonus. It saves me a huge amount of time. Sometimes, because there's a huge amount of improv, I still can't find it, so I'll yell out to my first (assistant), "Can you pull up that scene where we have that alt joke?" and he'll be able to find it and put it in a bin so I can integrate it in the scene that I'm working on. One of the things I haven't talked about is that there's another editor that works with me named Melissa Bretherton, and she is a huge, huge benefit because she has a different sensibility and that brings things to the fore that I never would have seen, and I couldn't do the movies without her, she's so integral to what we're doing. I'll also ask the assistants that prep all the scenes, "What made you laugh? What was your favorite joke?" I don't look at the dailies except cursory. I have dailies on PIX (streaming dailies service) on my iPad sitting on my desk just kind of running while I'm editing. So I'm seeing what the setups are and what the idea is, but I'm not really looking at performance or anything like that. I only start looking at performance once the dailies have been entered into my system with the Script Integration, that way, I'm not wasting time because I could spend all day every day just looking at dailies during production, and I need to be cutting stuff together. Once they're in Script Integration I've got these beats and I can see the first third of the scene or the first beat and then I'll

just watch that section—I'll watch all of the coverage for just that beat. Then as I'm doing that, I'm pulling things that I like, pulling jokes or ideas or looks or angles or whatever it is that I respond to, and I pull them into the cut. Now I've got that version done, and I can look at the next beat. So I'm looking at everything, but in sections.

Hullfish: So with the amount of improv you're dealing with, are you guys getting these things transcribed, then using transcriptions instead of using the shooting script?

Brent White: Sometimes it does. There's a new thing that's been happening on the last Judd movie and also on Paul's last movie: there was a stenographer on set.

Hullfish: Wow!

Brent White: (Laughs) … she sits behind the script supervisor and types away madly. She writes down everything that happens. So I have this record, and in the Judd world there are these books, and he will go through the books and highlight the lines or ideas—not even looking at the picture—he'll just look at the words and he'll go "that joke … this joke …" and he'll highlight them, and then we'll get them back, and I have to figure out how to take that element that he highlighted and do a version that includes that in the scene. Sometimes the lines are not even on camera. Sometimes it's a funny joke, but it's not on camera, so I have to figure out how to make that idea work.

Hullfish: You alluded to the use of Script Integration to make your valuable time with the director more efficient. Another thing I've used with ScriptSync is that it allows me to audition an entire series of takes and setups of a single line one after the other without having to assemble a performance selects reel for that line. I just highlight the line in the script and select all of the takes and hit play, and you can hear every line reading in rapid order.

> "ScriptSync makes it so much easier for the director to look at a different take."

Mary Jo Markey: We have one assistant dedicated to getting the ScriptSync in order for each scene. It makes it so much easier when JJ's in there and he wants to look at a different take of something. It makes it so much faster to find what he's looking for.

Maryann Brandon: It's a big, valuable tool for us, especially in heavy dialogue scenes with lots of cameras.

Hullfish: How do each of you like your bins organized? Or are you strictly working from the ScriptSync script?

Mary Jo Markey: I definitely need the takes in bins so I can watch everything—little gestures, little moments that aren't going to be ScriptSynced that I need to know about. I only use ScriptSync when I want to compare line readings and that sort of thing.

Hullfish: Sidney, there are a lot of time pressures in TV. Do you use ScriptSync?

Sidney Wolinsky: Yes. Absolutely. My assistant sets up ScriptSync if there's time. And as you know, ScriptSync is pretty labor-intensive, so when I only have one assistant I'll just select specific scenes where I think it will be valuable for me to have in ScriptSync. And if I'm lucky enough to have a second assistant, I'll get the whole show set up in ScriptSync.

Hullfish: That's just how I did it on my last show.

Sidney Wolinsky: Yeah. And usually I won't use ScriptSync for my first cuts.

Hullfish: So what are you using it for then?

Sidney Wolinsky: Well, after I've cut the scene, if it's a complex scene with a lot of setups—it makes it so much easier to go back and look at stuff and say "What's available for that line or that piece of action?" and so when I'm reviewing the material myself, it's incredibly helpful, and when I'm working with a director or producer, it's really helpful because I can immediately go to that line and say "Let's look at the other takes or the other setups." But by not first-cutting, I take the pressure off my assistant by not needing to have him or her have the ScriptSync ready immediately. I can say, "When you get a chance, sync this scene, and when you have it, I'll be able to go back and check it out."

Hullfish: Todd, you handled dailies for Big Bang Theory. Tell me about the process of prepping for the edit and how things were organized.

Todd Morris, Big Bang Theory: On digitize day I receive the four cameras, which are recorded separately on HDCam SR, and I also receive an eight channel DVD-RAM of the audio. I digitize those, sync up to the DVD-RAM and multi-group all four cameras. That goes into ScriptSync.

Peter Chakos, Big Bang Theory: They only record the iso cameras. There's no line cut.

Todd Morris: So I import a text file from the writers into Script Integration in Avid. I'll go through, and I'll mark scenes and pages within it and put in a multigroup and mark each line on the fly, drag the multigroup to where in the script it relates. Put a mark in, hit record and mark each line on the fly.

The first take will just be a gray line. If they do a re-write, I don't type in the re-write, but what I do is mark the line blue. If they re-write it again, I'll do it another color. If he sees a color, he knows that there's a re-write. If we do wild-lines, I mark them in red. So he can look at the script, and it's all color coded, and he knows where to find things.

Hullfish: David, you're one of the first people I ever talked to about really using ScriptSync as an overall approach to organizing and accessing dailies. Can you tell us about your process?

David Helfand, Great News: I've been a long, huge proponent of the Script tool, or Script Integration, in Avid. I started using it on Meridien systems in the early 2000s and haven't cut functionally from a bin for more than a decade, whether the scene is dialogue, action or a music montage. I want my cuts to link up to the scripted clips and won't even watch dailies until my assistant organizes them for me, not only grouping together multiple cameras, but also building the Avid script with restarts, alt dialogue or ad libs. We break it into sections according to the shooting schedule so I can edit one section while he scripts another. All the footage—pick-ups, circled takes, best lines, B negative, wild tracks—are color coded in a way that gives me a spectrograph of everything shot. That's critical when you have an average of 10 to 20 scattered passes per line of dialogue as we do. I'm able to glean a lot of information immediately and can make very detailed, thorough decisions on the spot and give quick feedback to those I'm working with. I don't expect it to be perfect and will tweak it myself as I work with it. I'll re-arrange the lines by angle or shot size like a bin. I'll review the script notes and colorize areas to remind me what line reads or takes people favored. All that is kind of blueprinted into my Avid Script with detail the lined script can't realistically provide. Once it's done, I never look back at paper. It's not for everybody's workflow or cutting sensibility, but I've found that for me it's incredibly powerful and worth the time invested.

One reason I like it is that I want to review the audio of every single take even if I am not going to use that coverage. I cheat audio for performance a lot, not just to fix pronunciation or mic hits. In comedy especially, it's so audio-driven, so word-driven, that switching word order or paraphrasing a line can ruin a setup. I'll utilize snippets from various takes to cheat correct phrasing into an actor's mouth or add inflection. A good line read shouldn't be discarded because there was a flub halfway through. Also some

actors come fresh out of the gate with really great intuitive performances in wide angles. While I don't want to use that visually, audio-wise I want to consider it. Having the means to quickly go through 20 line readings, resets or hiccups helps me keep from missing any gems or tidbits I can weave in.

Hullfish: Many people say ScriptSync doesn't work with comedy specifically because there's so much improv.

David Helfand: Since ad-libbing has gotten more prevalent, it's actually even more important for me to script it in. Ad-libs vary from take to take so we paraphrase the concepts. As I'm looking at it, I can see "On this take it was phrased in a certain way and then on the next take they did it, but shifted the words around, and in the next three takes they dropped that idea altogether and then in takes 5 and 6 they came back to the concept," so you have all these ad-lib ideas spread across in a very scatter-shot way. By having those things in the script, I can look amongst the various takes, especially while working with a director or producer, and figure out how to combine the third pick-up of take 1 with the fourth pick-up of take 5 because they had sort of a similar word structure. If I have to rely on memory to sift through the numerous pick-ups, it's going to take a lot longer. People will tend to get impatient or give up on an area and will just feel satisfied with where something was.

Hullfish: Brent White said they had a transcriptionist on the set—like a court stenographer—who transcribed all of the improvs as they happened so he could use them in Script Integration.

David Helfand: We did that as well on The Mindy Project. They discovered their preference for ad-libs about halfway into the first season, and it grew more and more. Sometimes the ad-libs are on story, but sometimes they'd go off on these long tangents and would just be riffing. When it got to be more than we could possibly deal with, we had a writer's assistant on set transcribing the various takes that we would incorporate into our Avid Script. It's very useful when you have to blend so many random ideas and essentially re-writing after the fact because of all those joke adds. You have to figure out how to weave them in in a way that energizes those moments without de-railing the scene. That's the biggest challenge. The last Mindy episode I did, they just went hog-wild with ad-lib so I had to figure out in a five or six day schedule how to accommodate all that extra material. My editor's cut was close to 50 minutes long, more than twice as long as the 21:30 delivery length. When Mindy got in, I was able to review all that stuff with her much faster and start making decisions about what parts to lop off and which things could be condensed.

Hullfish: Eddie, you build selects reels to analyze performance and line reads. What about using ScriptSync or Script Integration instead? You can audition dozens of different reads that way without the need to build reels.

Eddie Hamilton: True, except they commonly re-write the script on the set, so ScriptSync doesn't work. So the theory of that is sound, it's just that the practice doesn't usually work because they're changing so much on the fly and they're ad-libbing, so I can't use Script Integration. Plus, I find that it takes so long to set it up and there are so many variables that it's easier to ask an assistant to help me with selects reels.

Michael McCusker, The Girl on the Train: I've used ScriptSync a couple of times. The times I used it, I thought, "Wow, this is unbelievable! I just cut this scene in half the time it usually takes me!" Then I looked at the scene, and it was awful. I realized it has nothing to do with the software; I was just cutting to the next line of dialogue, and so I put it together and it was just a flat-line of a scene. I think it's valuable, and I'm still going to try it again, but when I sit down and cut a scene, I watch through the takes trying to figure out what's going on, getting a sense of where the scene is, where the actor is and how they're moving through it, and I find stuff. But with ScriptSync, I found myself going, "Eh, that's a fine reading, let's put that in." I know a lot of people use ScriptSync. The other editor I am working on Wolverine with uses it and thinks it's really valuable.

The raw materials of this book include more than a quarter million words from nearly 50 interviews. The full interviews are available on the book's companion website, www.routledge.com/cw/Hullfish.

The companion website also gives access to several additional chapters that are not in the book. A "sister" chapter to this chapter is called "Schedule" and provides details of the post-production schedule of many of the movies discussed in this chapter and throughout the book. The companion website also has numerous screenshots that would not print well in the book. The full-resolution, full-color images are available on the website: timelines, project windows, bins and other screengrabs and photos.

With the project organized, the editor is faced with a blank canvas. The next chapter describes the way that challenge is attacked.

Chapter 2
Approach to a Scene

Even for experienced editors, one of the most difficult aspects of the edit is simply starting a new scene. The process has to start by watching dailies, but many editors even have different approaches for doing that. Experienced editors approach something that seems so simple and basic with a number of techniques that are designed for either maximizing the "harvest" of good moments, for speeding the process when time is of the essence or for simply handling a monumental amount of footage without becoming overwhelmed and paralyzed by choices.

After screening dailies—or sometimes intertwined with it—the methods for starting the edit are almost as numerous as the editors who discussed the issue. Some have learned techniques shared by others they've worked with or have simply come to the same methodology on their own.

Screening Dailies (Rushes)

Hullfish: David, when you're watching **dailies**, what are you looking for? How do you approach it?

> **Dailies**: (or the more British term, "rushes") is a term to describe the footage shot by the production crew each day. The terms come from the fact that in the film days, the editorial team would receive daily "rushed" work prints from the previous day's shoot.

David Wu, Hard Boiled: I personally have a frightening memory. In my mind, I have memorized more than 500 phone numbers. So when I watch dailies, I don't take notes. After one pass, it's printed in my brain already. I try to interpret how the director wants to tell the story with all this footage. I like to surprise the director. There are two kinds of surprise. ARRGGHHH! and AHHHH! So I mostly get an AHHHH! Be-

cause I watch every take of dailies from the clapper to the end frame. Watching dailies is like going to a treasure island. It's an Easter egg hunt. A lot of people find it to be a burden or a job. I don't find it a job. I think it's fun. I'll tell you why. It's so amazing when you find bits and pieces.

Hullfish: Screening dailies may seem like a simple process, but sometimes the sheer volume of footage turns the process into a major undertaking. Eddie, what do you think the shooting ratio was for Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation?

Eddie Hamilton, Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation: I have not got an accurate footage count for Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation, but I would estimate around 250 to 300 hours. Shooting ratio is at least 100 to 1. The motorbike scene had about 12 hours of footage for a scene that is about 2:40 in the film (a shooting ratio of 270:1). I had a similar situation on the skydive sequence in Kingsman. 15 hours for a scene that runs about 4 minutes in the film (225:1 ratio).

Hullfish: That's a lot of footage. Kelley, let's talk about the process of watching dailies.

> "I realized there is an actual skill to watching dailies."

Kelley Dixon, Better Call Saul: I watch dailies in my editing room on my system, and I usually watch them in multicam (quad-split) mode. It's usually just two cameras: A and B, but sometimes it can be as many as three or four. Nowadays they are shooting so many scenes and so many setups, it just gets way too hard to watch in single camera mode. A scene of dailies might have four or five hours of dailies—my eyes are glazed over at that point.

Obviously I'm looking for nuance and stuff like that. When I first started, I realized there is an actual skill to watching dailies, and every editor, I'm sure, approaches it differently, but I found that mine has evolved, and I'm much more confident about what it is that I am looking for.

There's four hours of footage and I have three more scenes to do today. So, if you see me absorbing the material, a lot of times I'm just looking at that setup and saying, "Ok, I've got this, I've got another tracking shot," and I start to kind of think about how I am going to put the scene together as I am watching. When I get into some of the closer stuff, some shots that are more interesting, maybe some shot where there's a reveal, or something like that, I'll start to really, really notice performances even

more. I'll start to notice if there's something in a performance that I am really trying to make my way towards. And by then, I'll have an idea in my head of what the scene means, whose scene it is, and what's the object of the scene or the subject. I'll notice these different nuances in the scene.

So for instance, with Breaking Bad or Better Call Saul, the directors like a lot of wide shots.

They like really, really big and expansive wide shots where they send the camera up 50 feet in the air or more. And I'm just watching small people move around in the background. I don't really need to watch the whole scene on this giant wide shot because I'm probably only going to use that shot one time. Honestly, I am not looking for sync dialogue because you can't tell what they're saying anyway.

Hullfish: Anne, what's your process of watching dailies?

> "I don't write notes because it distracts me from watching the rest of the footage."

Anne Coates, Lawrence of Arabia: I like to sit back and enjoy them, actually, like a movie-goer. I sit with my director, preferably in a theater on a large screen. I don't like it in digital where you hover around a small screen. I like seeing it on a big screen, and I leave myself open to watch it and enjoy it. In that process I'm picking out little things that I like and remembering them. I don't make any notes. If I'm sitting there with my assistant, I'll nudge him. I won't tell him what I've nudged him for, but he'll take down the timecode. I don't write notes myself because I find it distracts me from watching the rest of the footage. I look at my first cut from a point of view of what it's saying to me on the emotional level: am I getting from it what I want? Or am I just being very clever with cuts, because that's not what I want to be.

Hullfish: Fred, you watch dailies with Quentin usually. Is there a method to this screening?

Fred Raskin, The Hateful Eight: I generally will put a marker on any moment Quentin mentions in dailies. If he turns to me and says, "I really like that performance there." Or if he simply laughs while we're screening dailies, I'll know that's a moment he really likes. I make sure to mark all of those. He probably shoots about an hour and a half's material per day. He only shoots with one camera, so it's not an unreasonable amount of material, but obviously when you have a lot of takes of a long

scene, it can become a big job to watch all of the material and find your favorite moments. I figure out how I'm going to start the scene and then I just go in and start working with all of the material and kind of going with my gut. Obviously I'll have seen specific moments when I was watching the dailies, and I say, "Oh, this has to play on this shot because it's so effective there, so I'll work towards getting that to happen."

Hullfish: Dan, has your approach changed with the switch from cutting on film to **NLEs**?

> **NLE**: Non-linear editor. Examples are Avid, Premiere, Final Cut Pro, Lightworks and Montage.

Dan Hanley, In the Heart of the Sea: I remember when I was editing on film—you had to look at all the dailies. Because of the mechanics of it, you really had to think about the road map, and I've stayed with that process. I don't want to miss any beats because it evolves for me as I'm cutting. I want to be able to react to that and adjust my thinking as I'm putting it together.

So let's say you've got five printed takes from three cameras. I'll run an A, a B and a C camera, but I'll run it from a couple of the takes and get an idea of what's going on in a scene. So right off the bat, if I've got 10 hours of dailies on a given day, by doing that, my dailies viewing is cut by 50–60%. So as I'm working to construct my first initial assembly, I'm looking at the rest of the coverage as I go along. I'll put a marker where I finished in that take and then I'll start looking at the coverage from the other actors. I'll go back to that take, and I'll pull that down and continue watching it to see where I'm going to pick it up again, and sometimes I'll high-speed through it knowing that I'm not going to be in that coverage. Or I'll look at one take of it and say, "There's really nothing in the composition of this shot." When I finish a scene, I'll put it aside and let it sit for a day or two so that when I come back and start fine-tuning it, my perspective's a little different.

> "I make note of the moments that I like and build the scene around those moments."

Hullfish: Mike, you and Dan have worked together a long time. Is your approach similar?

Mike Hill, In the Heart of the Sea: Dan and I both learned the old-fashioned way, **butt-splicing** work-prints, so this is a whole different universe—my approach has evolved. I'll have some notes that I've gotten from Ron from the set.

> **Butt-splicing**: Film editing term where two pieces of film are joined together without overlap, using tape to join the two pieces.

A lot of it is gut. I like to look at the particular takes that Ron likes best. I look at those first. I make a note of the moments that I like the best and try to build the scene around those moments. I might even lay those down first when I start the scene … still not quite sure what my first shot is going to be all the time. But I've always found that the toughest thing is to find that first shot. Sometimes Ron will design a specific shot to open the scene, then that's easy. Once that opening shot is picked, then everything starts to roll from there in terms of building it.

Hullfish: When you're finding those little moments in takes, are you marking that?

Mike Hill: I'm usually writing things down on a pad. The scene number. The take. Just a little note to myself. Sometimes I'll use markers on some of the takes.

Hullfish: David, what's your approach to dailies?

David Brenner, Batman v Superman: I'll watch everything once through, without making notes, so I understand everything I have, before I start making my selects. I'll look at every take, and I'll pull select pieces, which may cover three or four lines of dialogue or an action

from point A to point B. I'll keep repeating these moments from other good takes, edging forward in time until I've covered the whole scene. Maybe the selects might be half an hour if it's a three minute scene. It's those selects that I'll use when I do my first cut. This is a process that goes back to when I cut my first movies with Oliver Stone, and he was nervous about jumping into an edit, so he wanted to slowly refine with selects first. Later, when I want to look for extensions or I want to start to question things, I might go back to the dailies, or I might look at the selects if I've done a good job of ordering the moments.

Image 2.1 Dailies scene bins from Arrival.

Martin Walsh, Wonder Woman: I make notes, and those notes are my basic, simple reminder to myself: "This was good. I loved this shot. Use this." I write very, very simple, direct notes: "Excellent. Great. Crap." Try to be as objective as you can through the whole of the post-production process. Keep going back to that note, because if it was funny last September, then it's funny next September. It didn't stop being funny, you just got bored with it. I find that sometimes I'll start at the beginning of a scene, and sometimes I'll start in the middle. It's whatever grabs me. If there's an amazing reading of a particular line of dialogue, and it happens to be 30 seconds into a scene, I'll start with that, and I'll work my way out from that because I know that's where I have to go.

Hullfish: Do you find a value to screening dailies projected?

Martin Walsh: Of course. You get to see the eyes. You get to see actors performing. You get to see whether there are any technical issues. That's hugely important these days. Focus issues can slip by quite easily.

> "I like to see the progression the actors go through as they work through the material."

Jeffrey Ford, Captain America: Civil War: I basically go through the footage in the order that it was photographed on the day. Each scene is broken into three or four segments, and I build selects based on those three or four segments, based on the size of the thing or based on the screenplay or based on the blocking. Depending on where the actors move or the stage line has changed or where the script has a specific transition emotionally or intellectually where I know I am probably going to have a cut. So my method is this: first I'm breaking down the movie into scenes, second I'm breaking the scenes into three or four individual segments. For longer scenes, sometimes I break them into five segments. This goes for dialogue as well as action. I consider action to be no different than dialogue. It needs to be broken down into three or four units of dramatic action per scene, and then big action scenes actually have many sub scenes within those.

So it's really about getting the material down to smaller bits so that I can manage it and study it and compare it. And once I've made some comparative analysis with what's been shot and looking at the notes the directors have given me, I then sit down and begin to assemble the material. I find the shape myself … put the scene together so that it feels right to me. Just visually with a minimal amount of sound and no music at all. And once I've got the scene working pretty well, I loop back around and I re-read the director's notes and I re-read the script notes and I re-read the screenplay. And I think, "Well, did I miss anything that's important that I didn't have sitting in the back of my head when I was cutting this?" Very often I did. In the process of cutting the scene for myself, I find some things that the directors may not have seen or may not have asked for, and then going back and looking at what they've requested and what's in the screenplay, I go back to the source material and look at what we initially planned, to make sure that's in there as well. When I have a scene in place, and I've had a day to go away from it and come back and do another pass, that's usually when it's ready to add the sound work and show to the director.

One of the things I've also learned is that I like to see the progression the actors go through as they work through the material.

Hullfish: You were talking about watching dailies. Are you watching them on the Avid?

> "It's really only important to write down moments that pop."

Jeffrey Ford: I'm always trying to watch them on the big screen because I'm trying to assess the technical quality of the photography and focus and sound. I do this review right away, so if the directors call me, I can tell them whether we have it or not. I'm also looking for moments and story points that need to be made. If I see a performance moment that's particularly distinctive, that stands out in dailies, yes, I'll jot it down. But I've noticed over the years that it's not that important for me to write down what's bad. It's really only important to write down moments of performance that pop, and I recognize the story or the character really comes through vibrantly and distinctively in that particular moment. So if I really see something that is really special, I'll make a note of it, but most of it is flowing by, and I'm trying to see what catches my attention and kind of make sure we have everything we need. I'll also write down moments when the actors make mistakes in blocking or with dialogue where it allows me an option later. For example if an actor moves differently in a take and crosses on a different line or doesn't finish a particular line, or finishes it differently, it might provide me material that might work for the narrative. My ears are open for moments that might be an opportunity to play the scene differently if we wish to do so in the future. Very often the scripted version is the one we go with, but sometimes if you have to remove some dialogue, you're always looking for those little things that allow you to do that.

Hullfish: Kate, how do you approach viewing dailies?

> "I think that there is a lot of value in the first take."

Kate Sanford, *Vinyl*: I'm lucky enough, and I think I'm old enough that I learned kind of old school in the days when the whole crew watched dailies together. I had that experience as an apprentice where I would sync dailies, and I would bring them to the crew at lunch time, and we'd watch them. The director and the editor would sit together, and they'd whisper. Back then, we only synced the selects. So, there weren't quite as many dailies to watch, but it still could be an hour or more. I really try to watch all of them. Especially at the beginning of the episode, I watch from start to finish. If I don't have time, I'll go to the selects first, watch those in order, and then I'll back-track and I'll watch the others. I'll watch with the script supervisor's notes—the lined script and facing pages—next to me. I'll always look at what the script supervisor wrote and cross-reference that opinion with my own. What I'm trying to do is find

a sense of taste. I'm trying to understand how those decisions were made on the set. I'm looking at paperwork to find clues. I'm looking at the performances to find clues and the development of the performance and the development of the blocking to find a pattern. People say, "Why don't you just look at the last take to see where they ended up?" That could be a cheat, but I think that there is a lot of value in the first take sometimes. It's fresh. Sometimes, they get a great take in the middle, and they keep going for some reason. So, I really find that the best take could be anywhere, and I want to make sure I'm thorough and see everything.

> "I watch in order, because you can see how things develop. You can read between the lines."

Hullfish: Conrad, describe how you watch dailies.

Conrad Buff, The Huntsman: Winters War: I think that if you don't watch everything, you're not doing your job! Things have changed, certainly. The days of screening dailies in the evening with the director, after shooting, are pretty much vanishing or have vanished. I like to watch in order, because you can see how things develop. You can read between the lines. You can glean information. You can see how things transpire. But for me, it's always looking for performance. What do I like, and what do I react to? In the old days on film, it would certainly be presented in order. I would sit there with a notepad, with or without a director, and make my own notes about, "I love that reading. I love that look, or I love that composition, photographically." And then, I try to go back and harness all of those things that I liked. Sometimes, you run into problems trying to make the scene work and incorporate the bits you love. But usually there's a way. I don't find it that much different now except the random access to the footage is quite lovely, but I'm still starting at the top and doing a sort of linear review to watch the progression, to see how the actors change, look for subtle differences. Again, it's very subjective and kind of seat-of-the pants: an emotional response to the material.

Steven Mirkovich, Risen: There are definitely preferred takes. There's no two ways about it. I'm not saying that what the director feels is the best take is wrong, or that I would ignore it, but I use it as a guide and not as a bible. I do think that you have to look at everything because there are discoveries and unexpected saves. Maybe it's for down the line, a different scene, or it's a look you might need to steal, or a whip pan, a camera bump or anything interesting, you'll think, "I'll remember that bit." It was never intended to be used for this or that purpose, but it may help me out of a jam. You have these moments where you pull a rabbit out of the hat, and then you have

those moments when you look at something you loved the night before and say to yourself, “What was I thinking? That doesn’t work at all.”

Hullfish: What’s the approach to watching dailies for you, Steven?

Steven Sprung, Star Trek Beyond: When we are reviewing dailies as a group, we’ll generally start with Justin’s preferred or circled takes, and if he shot with two or more cameras, we’ll screen the A camera of the first circled take, the B camera of the second circled take, and C camera of the third and so on. This is a good way for us all to just get a sense of the scene and see the basic shape of how Justin shot it. Whoever cuts the scene will always get way more in-depth.

Hullfish: By going through that process, you know the shape of the scene that you can tweak from there, right? I think that’s very valuable. You were saying you mark stuff. How were you marking it?

Image 2.2 Avid bin for Scene 114 from the movie Arrival. Courtesy of Joe Walker.

Kelly Matsumoto, Star Trek Beyond: I usually take actual notes. When I watch dailies, I kind of build the scene in my head. Then I watch all the dailies and actually take analog notes about the details that stand out. I asterisk takes that I like or write certain lines down or note small looks or performances within a take that stand out. Old school.

Hullfish: Conrad, how are you taking notes? Locators in the Avid?

Conrad Buff: I don't really use locators … with rare exceptions. My preference is to just really remember pieces. One thing I do, when I'm finished with the scene, at some point, I will go back through and scan through all the dailies again, just to see if there's some nuance that will help enhance the scene and reinforce it, make it stronger, more interesting. So, I'm very thorough with examining the stuff.

> "I end up using different approaches—whatever helps me process the footage for that particular scene."

Job Ter Burg, Elle: I watch dailies on the editing system. I usually work with a large plasma monitor so I don't watch it on too small a screen. Before I start working on a scene, I like to watch all takes. Sometimes, if we have a tremendous amount of angles or something, I might go to the last two or three takes first to find the way I think the scene needs to be constructed, and then I'll go through the takes as I am working on it. I sometimes wish I had one approach that I knew would always work, but I always end up using different approaches—whatever helps me process the footage for that particular scene. Honestly, a lot of times you are just wondering: how the hell am I going to start this? And often you have to just rewatch the whole thing to find the one moment that speaks to you to get you started. I usually start with a rough assembly, without any fine cutting. For dialogue scenes it will often be a line-by-line cut of the performances I like best. I'll sometimes scroll through that assembly a few times or play it at double speed to check if the "grammar" of the scene is starting to make sense. Once I get a feel for that, I'll dive into the actual fine cutting, and these days, I tend to either mute the audio or play it back so softly that I can hear the actors speak, but I won't be distracted by anything in the production soundtrack. Otherwise, sounds that are not supposed to be there (and that will absolutely be gone when you're in final mix) can easily mess with your sense of rhythm. When I feel I have something that at least has a proper visual pace, I start working on the sound quite a bit.

> "I try to preserve the concept that editors are meant to know every frame and where everything is."

Image 2.3 Cast of AMC's Preacher. Courtesy of Sony Pictures Television.

Joe Walker, Sicario: A very crucial thing for me is viewing the dailies and making mental notes on the things that I like and respond to. I try to preserve the concept that editors are meant to know every frame and where everything is. What I'm most interested in is performance: seeing, "This one's an angry, vitriolic take. This one's an angry, sad take. This one's sinister." But I suppose on a movie like Blackhat, with three hours of dailies per day, it's impossible to view everything and assemble it in a day, so that's where you rely on different ways of chunking things down.

Jeffrey Ford: On this movie there were a lot of multiple camera setups, and they never stop rolling. They never cut, so you're talking about 40-minute takes. It can go very long. We end up with a lot of material. A lot of that material is not necessarily useful in between takes, but what is useful is that I can hear the director speaking to the actors, so I feel like I'm there. But I look at all of that material. Sometimes I speed through it if it's just a camera looking at the ceiling or something. But I try to watch as much as I can and look for any content that might be in there that's in addition to what's scripted. I really give it a once over, just viewing it and studying it.

Hullfish: Sidney, taking notes and using markers seems to be a common theme so far in developing an approach.

Sidney Wolinsky, Boardwalk Empire: I used to take extensive notes and stuff, but I found that as I cut the scene that there were so many factors other than just noticing and noting a little thing. You're making decisions on what angle to use, what size of shot, who to be on, all that stuff, so I usually pick a take to start cutting with—a take of each setup usually—and start cutting using those takes, unless I made a note of something I particularly liked or wanted to include or thought was valuable. And as I hit a spot where I wanted to be on a certain angle and that take wasn't working, I'd check the other takes of that angle, and if none of those worked, I might change how I cut that spot. Then when the scene is finished, I'll often look through it and make oth-

er adjustments, and then I'll review all the dailies to see if there's anything that I missed. Especially, if I used a master in a certain spot, looking at the other masters to see if there was possibly something better. It's a continuous evolution process.

Image 2.4 Tom Cross's Avid edit suite for La La Land. Courtesy of Tom Cross.

> "Watch each take and immerse yourself in the rhythms of the performances."

Tom Cross, Whiplash: I'll always start by watching all the dailies for a particular scene before I make a cut on that scene. Often, I'll look at the last take of every setup in a scene first, just to get a quick glimpse of the coverage. Then I'll immediately go back to the first take and the first setup and watch every take in order. I'll add locators or markers in the master clips on moments I like or add comments as needed. As I'm watching each take, I try to immerse myself in the rhythms of the performances. As I start to move from one setup to another, I also start retaining the coverage and start cutting it in my head.

Of course, each director works differently, and this approach to viewing dailies from the end doesn't work for a David O. Russell film. Looking at the last take doesn't really give you a full inventory of his material. You really benefit from watching his dailies in order from the first take onward because you get a better feel for his process and how the performances and camera evolve. Each camera setup is not easily definable in terms of how to use it. They're usually chock full of so many rich details and pieces, and it's important to really focus and catalog all those moments. In all cases, you're looking for whatever connective tissue might help you join two pieces of film together.

For traditional dialogue scenes, I don't do select reels unless there's a lot of improv. Usually, I'll just mark favorite moments in the master clips.

> "You're looking for whatever connective tissue might help you join two pieces of film together."

If I'm working on an action scene, a montage or something purely visual, I'll string the dailies together in a long sequence and then cut it up so that I have selects by the end. Then I'll dupe that sequence and try to cut a scene out of it or try to create a structure for it.

On my current film, La La Land, I watched dailies standing up. I have one of those electric desks that lowers and raises. I also have a small treadmill under my desk, and I'll walk and mark takes while I'm viewing rushes.

Watching Dailies Backwards

Stephen Mirrione, The Revenant: My team puts everything together for the scene in a bin with all of the script notes—which I really rely on—then I watch the takes backwards.

> "It's about finding a moment to respond to, deciding, "This moment is the anchor of this scene.""

Essentially I'll watch until I see something I really like, and I'll grab that and keep watching, and if there's something I like better, I'll grab that.

For something with lots of coverage, I'll probably start with a selects sequence, then look at that sequence to figure out where to go next. If it's a more straightforward dialogue scene, I might start putting the pieces together and then review and make adjustments.

For me, the goal is to find a way to organize all the material and understand it in a way that I can access it in my mind as I'm thinking about it. A lot of times that is just about figuring out what can be ignored so it doesn't take up too much space in my brain as I'm trying to figure it out. It's about finding a moment to respond to. Sometimes I just have to watch all the dailies and say, "Well, this is the anchor. This moment is the anchor of this scene." So I'll build the scene around it. I try to not do something the same way every day. Some scenes I'll put together very quickly without watching everything, and then I'll go back and watch everything. Some scenes I'll

watch everything first, and I'll really think about it. There were a lot of times where, if I had the luxury of it, I would wait to cut the scene until after I had an opportunity to watch dailies projected big, usually with Alejandro, so we could talk about it first, because I find that my first pass at something is usually my best version of it. Obviously I'm always going to be making changes and fixes. A good example of that is a dream where Leo (Glass) goes into a deserted church. That scene, when I saw it projected in dailies, I just knew how to put it together. So that's one example of a scene where sometimes you put it together and it's perfect, and if you change it, there's some magic that gets ruined when you start to overthink it.

Hullfish: Jeffrey, do you buy this backwards approach?

> "Sometimes we're not looking for 'correct.' We're looking for aberrations in behavior that give nuance."

Jeffrey Ford: Sometimes I think that might work, but for the most part I never approach it that way, and the reason is simply that when an actor begins working through material—and this is more important when you're talking about dialogue and performance as opposed to action—but for the most part, when an actor is working through material, they are fresh initially. They are making choices with less thought on the earlier takes. As they become more comfortable with the words and the blocking, it makes the scene too perfect and not as idiosyncratic. Those takes tend to be the correct takes, and sometimes they're necessary because the blocking is correct and the dialogue is delivered correctly, but sometimes we're not looking for "correct," we're looking for aberrations in human behavior that give nuance. I don't want to simply get to the easiest solution for the scene, I'm trying to find the most interesting and rich material that we created on set.

Hullfish: John, how do you view dailies? Are you taking notes? Using markers?

John Refoua, Magnificent Seven: I don't take notes. I want to know, "OK, how many closeups do I have? How many wide shots do I have? What happens in each setup?" I quickly scan through what I have. I have four of these close-ups. I have 17 of these wide shots where this happens. Of course the action and the composition changes from take 1 to take 17. I just quickly try to figure out a mental picture of all the different angles that I have because that helps me figure out what is going to happen in the scene. Then I start from the first take of the first setup. I go through it up to the point where I think that is where my cut is going to be, then I go to the next take. By the

time I'm done with the scene, I have gone through all the dailies. I go through the scene in little bits at a time.

Hullfish: So you never watch a take all the way through?

John Refoua: I do. A few of the takes I'll watch all the way through just to get the feel of the take. Then I'll take the first take of the setup, then I'll take the last take of the setup, and I'll see what is different between them. I will watch all the other takes between. I don't sit and watch all the takes. I can't do that. I'll basically do it as I'm cutting the scene. I'll go down certain roads, and I'll hit a dead end. I'll save that, so I have little alt cuts of different scenes. If I need a line or a look, I audition every little piece that has that line around it. That sort of helps me pick the best performance.

Hullfish: So you're editing as you're watching dailies. The process of watching dailies and editing is combined for you?

John Refoua: Yes. We're all on Avid now, so you can make as many cuts as you want, and you can change it. I cut in a take. I think, "That's a good take." Then I look at the next one, and I say, "This one is better." So I cut that one in. I take the other one out. It's so easy to have different versions. It's so easy to replace takes and move takes. Then I talk to Antoine, and he says, "Can we emphasize this moment?" That's something that I do with looks. I go through everything again. I am a guy that really tends to tweak quite a bit. Even if Antoine says, "I love this scene. It's great!" I still go back and try different things, and ideas come to me. I am always changing things.

Finding a Starting Place

Hullfish: Mary Jo, you sit down at your edit desk in the morning and where do you begin?

Mary Jo Markey, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: Well the first thing I do …

Maryann Brandon, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: Get coffee.

(LAUGHTER)

Mary Jo Markey: Procrastinate. Answer emails.

Maryann Brandon: Exactly.

Mary Jo Markey: We watch dailies together, but when I actually sit down to cut the scene, I watch them again, and I make very careful notes about something like, "This

is a fantastic reading, or this is such a great moment, or this works really well in a long run …" I'll just make all of these notes about what's working for me.

Hullfish: How do you make those notes?

> "My goal is always to make it feel like the scene happened. Not like I cut the scene."

Mary Jo Markey: Oh, pieces of paper. I'm very retro. (Laughter) Sometimes I'll make a different color locator—not the color that the assistants use for "action" or "pick-ups" but a different color for my notes, and when I see a different color, I know that's where the color marker is the moment I was talking about. And I usually have a pretty good idea of what I think the scene should be and what weight the scene should be given or who the scene should be weighted towards or whose eyes the scene should be seen through. Although, sometimes when I'm watching the dailies, the way that JJ has directed it or the way the actor has performed it will change my point of view a little bit. I'll see something and say, "I'm seeing something about this scene that I didn't fully realize before." Then I just start putting it together. I try to start without too much of a pre-determined decision. I try for an organic approach, where when I put one piece of film in, it is asking me to go here next. I realize that after I put one shot in, I really want a reaction shot from that person before I go to this person responding. And my goal is always to make it feel like the scene happened. Not like I cut the scene. I just try to make the timing and the sequence of shots feel as organic and natural as possible and not constructed. Not like I imposed some structure on it … that it evolved.

> "The toughest thing is to find that first shot."

Hullfish: To do that you have to start with the first shot.

Mary Jo Markey: Steve, I have to say, the hardest thing is picking that first shot.

Maryann Brandon: I always spend a lot of time figuring how to get into the scene. It has to be instinctual. There are no rules. It changes all the time. It also depends on the performance.

Hullfish: Or it depends on the previous scene or the next scene.

Maryann Brandon: Right. Where you're coming from. Where you're going to. How much of an overlap you want. Or how much of the last scene you don't want.

Hullfish: Lee, you said you had a lot of coverage options on Spectre. I spoke to someone else who said they try to never go back to the same shot, or never repeat an angle in a scene unless they needed to. Do you feel that necessity? I feel like, if I've got a great close-up, I can cut to that as many times as I need to.

Lee Smith, Spectre: That's slightly over-thinking it. I certainly avoid repetition, but not repetition of angles. I would much prefer to stay in an angle that's engaging me than go for a more artistic angle that is a setup that you're just trying to work in. Again, you have to ask yourself, "Why am I cutting?" It amazes me when people cut really vital dialogue, and they don't show the person saying it, because that's 50% of the equation. If you **play a line off**, you're diminishing that line, and you've got to be really, really strict in the way you edit whether you play a line over or off. It's not that I don't ever do it, but I'm very careful about it because this line might be a turning point or a very important line, and then you realize that the audience didn't hear it. Since they didn't see the person say it, it doesn't register.

> **Play a line off**: To "play a line off" means to choose an angle or shot for a line of dialogue that does not include the person speaking on camera. In other words, the line of dialogue is spoken off camera.

Hullfish: I've definitely heard that in a past interview: if you want the audience to remember something, play it on the speaker.

Lee Smith: Yeah, yeah. It doesn't matter if that ruins the rhythm of your cut or ruins the fact that you can't get where you want to go. Take the hit and stay with the reason that you're looking at them. Maybe you've got a third character listening to a scene, and you realize that you've gone to all this trouble to put this shot of that person listening, but not one moment in the scene do they require that shot. There's nothing about that shot that's moving the story forward, and they're not important enough to cut to. I've seen these cuts where the editor feels like they want to be inclusive, and they want to join everyone into the fray, but you realize that they've put a very important piece of dialogue over a secondary character, and it's like, "Why?" If they're not doing anything, don't cut to them.

Hullfish: Jan, what's your take on approaching a scene?

> "My thinking is done beforehand, looking for the 'lean forward moments.'"

Jan Kovac, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: I read the script and highlight the beats in the scene—one or two major beats in the scene. Then I find that section, and I look at all the takes for that section of the beat. I find the best take, cut it in, then build everything around it. So it either culminates on that beat or moves from that beat to a crescendo. I build around it in chunks. I try to move through the first few passes instinctually. But my thinking is done beforehand when I am looking for the beats—the "lean forward moments." So I start with those and build around.

Hullfish: Many editors start at the beginning and move forward. Others agree with you and find critical beats in the middle of the scene where "this is the moment" and this is the perfect take and angle which illustrates that moment, then you have to work forward and backwards from that moment.

Jan Kovac: I think it's important to work that way with so many tonal shifts because you can start really light or find some very funny joke in the beginning, but by the time you get to the moment important to your character and story, it may be totally off and feel like it doesn't belong in the movie.

Hullfish: Do you use a selects reel or just work from the dailies?

Lee Smith: For a straightforward scene, I would just cut it straight from dailies. If it's a complex action sequence, then I pull a selects reel. Just do a fast pass: bolting it together, because that's the only way to get through these big sequences. It's a good idea not to let them overwhelm you. Just do a slam cut where everything happens as it should happen in about the right time and don't worry too much about jazzing it up. That way you've at least got the structure. You've built the house before you come in and do the fine sanding.

Andrew Weisblum, Alice Through the Looking Glass: I have a pretty comprehensive approach to the way I put together a scene, and I take a lot time with it. I'm less concerned with being "up to camera," and more concerned with understanding the material as fully as I can and exploring everything so that adjustments are quick and easy once I've got a fully thought-out cut. So, I watch all the dailies. I know others in the chapter have said they just go to the circled takes and then explore the other footage when it's assembled. But once the scene is built, it's like a game of Jenga: I don't want to pull out a piece from the middle that connects to another piece that connects to another piece. I try to build it as coherently as possible and, in the process of that,

come to know all the footage. I break it down either into sections or line by line, and I don't discard any footage until I'm at that part in the scene. I'll work line-by-line or exchange-by-exchange. I'll break the scene down into four or five sections, similar to the method Jeff Ford talked about earlier. I'll watch all the footage from a section, figure out where the camera should be, where it should be starting and what information I need, when and who I should be on, and what happy accidents are in that section that I want to build a scene around. And by the time I'm done, I know what is available. And so then I'll have ideas later on that'll help me change it. I also look to see where the performances are going in all the takes as a progression. Just like Ford said, I get to learn something about the actors too, because there are certain actors who start fresh and fade out and others that get better as they go along.

Hullfish: Ann, what about your approach to a scene?

> "You've got to cut the whole scene, look at it, **then** go back and work on the cuts."

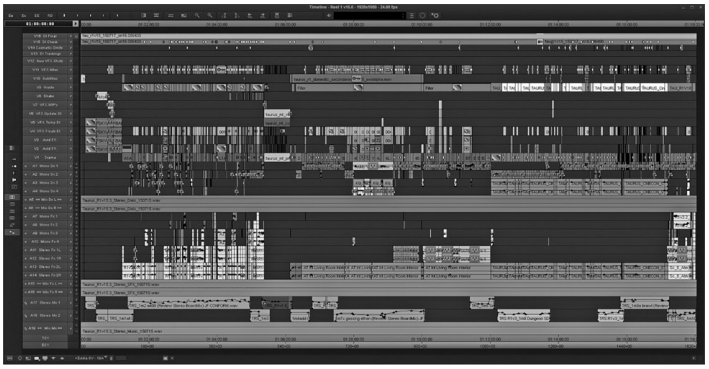


Image 2.5 Avid timeline for Reel 1 of Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation. Courtesy of Eddie Hamilton.

Anne Coates: I run the scene two or three times. I make notes occasionally. Mostly I just get it in my mind how I'm going to do it and I run through the material, and when I'm actually cutting it and looking at the shots more closely, I find things that maybe I want to change from my original idea because I'll see things closer. Sometimes things swing by me when I'm running through, and I'll see little close-ups and little things to use and I'll put them in, but I run the scene two or three times and it's just my process. I think you've got to cut the whole scene, look at it, then go back and work on the cuts. But I think it's very important to get an overall feeling of a scene in that position, and later on when you're putting it all together you may change it because it may be too fast in that place, where it seemed perfect when you cut it as a single piece. I find it quite fascinating that every film you do has different problems. Like

when I did Murder on the Orient Express, Sidney Lumet knew exactly what he wanted to do so we had very little cover, but I managed to find a few close-ups here and there that I'd pop in, and Sidney liked them and was OK, but he knows in his head more or less what he wants, so you follow his path and try to improve on it.

> "I always look for a second way into a scene because it keeps you fresh."

Hullfish: After watching dailies, what's your approach to a scene? Do you just dive into it?

Kelley Dixon: I always look for a second way into a scene just because I find that it keeps you very fresh with your material. You may not use it, or when the director comes in, they absolutely make you throw it in the trash and do it using the shot they designed, but I find that if you're constantly looking for another way in, it keeps things fresh, and many times the director will say, "I didn't want to do that, but it's really interesting." Or you save the other shot for a certain time in the scene. I find that editors that I look up to will have interesting and unusual ways of using footage that seems fairly conventional. I look for that in my own work, and I'm looking for that in other people's work. When I review the editing of my assistants, I'll always be looking for "Are they surprising me in any way?" Are they doing something that I didn't expect? You can definitely get into a conventional rut in editing … being pedestrian and dull. A lot of times when I'm doing something, I'm like, "Oh God! This is so terrible. What am I going to do here because this is just not good?" So I'm always looking for another way into a scene … train my eye to be on the lookout for something different or unusual. I'll watch dailies, and usually about halfway through those dailies, I will sort of have an idea of how I want to approach it, like "How does this fit in with the character? And how does this fit in with the story? What is this illustrating? What is the bigger picture here?" It's not just about putting pieces together. It's about a cohesiveness of the entire story.

Steven Mirkovich: I comb through every single take, even if it's an incomplete take, because you never know what you're going to find. I don't just pick a take and run, because it doesn't work as well. Usually, nobody's good all the way through a take. I find that if you're true to your art form, you really let every single take wash over you. There's been too much effort put into the making of the movie for me to get lazy on my end. That's doing a disservice to the rest of the picture. I put the hours in, and I give every single line that's delivered an opportunity to be the best line. I'm not saying I cut 20 versions. I don't do that. You learn to take a look, form an opinion and go with your strong instinct. If you're a second guesser, you're going to spend a lot more

time on a scene. If you feel strongly about something, you're probably right, for now anyway. After I deliver my editor's cut, I leave my ego at the door. I've had my crack at it, and now it's time to work with the director and studio in bringing the director's vision to a fine cut.

> "I want to get a scene cut together so I have something I can react to and hone."

Dylan Highsmith, Star Trek Beyond: Generally, if you're having a hard time, struggling with the scene, usually there's some little piece or something that you're missing, and the whole scene will kind of click. It's like, "Okay, that's how he intended it to work." Process-wise, I like to mark those points as I see them in dailies. My general process is, once I've done that, I just want to get a scene cut together, so I have something I can react to and hone. I'm not someone who will go through and just try and get every cut right. If the director calls, and he says "I'm going to come over and need to watch the scene right now," I want to know that I at least have something so I can hit play and watch. Until I have that, I can't relax. Once I've done that, I'll go back. It's always just a constantly evolving entity.

Hullfish: Job, you teach editing sometimes. What is a key to approaching a scene that you try to impart? What do you do if you're just stuck?

Job Ter Burg: In my workshops I try to make them aware of what they do by analyzing their work. A lot of what we do is instinctive, but when you're trying to determine why something is working or not, you sometimes need to rationalize it. That doesn't always work, but sometimes when you're stuck, you need to say to yourself, "So I am starting with this shot and it tells me this, then I cut to that shot. Why do I cut to that shot? What does it mean that I showed the audience that shot? Why do I go there and not some other route?" It's not a thought process that you can maintain when you're editing 'cause you would go insane, but if somehow you are stuck or you don't know what you've done is right, that makes a lot of sense. Rationalizing it, thinking, "Why is it structured in this way? Why did I do this? What does this mean?"

Hullfish: Obviously, you want as much of that approach as you can glean from the director. Kate, any tips on gleaning where the director's going with a scene?

Image 2.6 Bobby Cannavale and Olivia Wilde from HBO's Vinyl. Photo: Macall B. Polay / HBO.

Kate Sanford: When I'm watching dailies and they roll through a setup, I'll reach over to the mixing board when the director comes in and whispers something to an actor, and I'll be like, "Oh my God, what's he saying?" I'll turn up the lav mic to try to hear that secret information.

My other secret weapon is that I make friends with the script supervisor. I want that person to be my eyes and ears. He or she is on the set taking notes for me, and so I want to have a good rapport with the person, not only to ask, "Can you extrapolate on a note here?" but if I'm stumped, let's say, or if I'm confused that there are four different ways to start a scene that all seem equally interesting, they can help guide me. Let's say the director shot a big wide master, and then a crane that comes down and finds a character in the first line, and then there's an **insert shot** and then there's a character who turns into their shot—a number of things that could equally be interesting ways to begin.

> **Insert Shot**: Typically a close-up of something in the scene or some shot not specifically part of the general coverage of the scene. An example might be a close-up shot of a boiling pot of tea before a scene with two characters drinking tea.

I'll sometimes call the script supervisor and say, "Can I buy a clue? Can you give me a little hint here?" Like, what happened on the set? Or if there's a problem, obviously. If an insert wasn't shot, before I talk to the director or a producer, I'll call the script supervisor and say,

“Can you tell me what happened?” Because I don’t want to say something before I know if there was a conversation and that the director did not want to shoot an insert —didn’t feel it was necessary—and then I have to step back and put the scene together and say, “Yeah, I think we need it.” Then I’ll say to the director, “I understand it was a choice,” and in my most diplomatic way I’ll say, “Take a look at it, what do you think? I’m concerned that maybe we don’t see that quite as much as we should.”

Sometimes they can help me by saying, “It’s okay, the director intentionally wanted a time jump.” I’ll say, “Oh, okay, great. Perfect.” Or they’ll say to me, “Yes, that didn’t make sense. We had an enormous argument. They shut me down, and we had to move on.” I’d be like, “Okay, I got the situation.” So, when the director comes in, I’m armed with enough information to be as diplomatic as possible to help solve the problem.

Hullfish: Let’s jump back into your approach to a scene: you walk in the morning …

David Helfand, Great News: As I’m watching footage, I’m thinking about how to build in certain timing beats into the scene that might be interesting. You always want to “plus” the comedy where possible. Greg Daniels supposedly has a binder of comedy rules expressed as math formulas. They’re cheeky but have a lot of truth. For example:

J/T = F [where J is joke, T is Time, and F is Funny; the less time you take to tell a joke, the funnier it is].

J × 3 = Funny. J × 4 = Not Funny. J × 5 = Not Funny. J × 7 = Funny.

If HN, then SV [if Hit in the Nuts, then Squeaky Voice]

F Sound = Funny. F Smell = Not Funny [where F is Fart]

Cream π/Face = J2

So I keep those in the back of my head. Over time, a series develops little signature moments that you like to have reflected in the story. As I assemble I’ll try to build things that work for that scene that weren’t necessarily performed, adding my joke pitches with what was originally done and then whittling it all down for pace and timing. I’ll leave it just ever so fat, because I know it will tighten over time, and I don’t want it to feel rushed when we’re done. It’s hard for me to work like some editors, who construct a scene then move on and re-tighten in various passes. I have to figure out in advance exactly how I want it to play in the whole context of the episode, transition in and out, and then keep pounding it until it’s there. I won’t touch it again until

I connect all the scenes into the finished show, which gets a cursory review to balance audio levels and check for mistakes.

Personally it works better for me to commit to a viewpoint going in and then being open to surprises. That viewpoint is what I think people look for in one editor versus another. Of course humor is subjective, and you have to be able to adapt your sensibility to the people you're working with. Ideally you're close anyway, which is why you're there.

Hullfish: You need to have a perspective on the material.

David Helfand: Gotta have a perspective. I like to start with a strong perspective. I won't stick with it. You're going to kill yourself and your career if you stay too rigid to that perspective. You have to be willing to give everything up at some point, but you have to start with a strong take on things. It gets me thinking about the material and engaging in it rather than trying to respond to it just to make it smooth and seamless and perfectly matched. If the footage isn't giving me what I'd love the scene to be, how do I manipulate it to get there? How can I shift time within performances, expand or pull up a performance to give me the timing the scene needs? How can I blend two performances, and where do I need to put little Band-Aids or little visual cheats so I can present a scene in such a way that it sounds funny and flows, yet doesn't throw you? I find that once I start with a strong concept, I'm able to get away with a lot more things visually that I might not have realized because the ear leads in comedy more so than the eye.

Fast and Rough to Start

Hullfish: Fabienne, what's your approach with the compressed post schedules for some of the TV you've cut?

Fabienne Bouville, American Horror Story: I tend to cut the dailies very fast to keep up with production. I watch everything and come up with a creative strategy. Then I assemble it very fast and put it aside to move on to the next set of dailies, then string the cut scenes together, and that's when I reevaluate whether my approach for a scene is working, and I'll finesse the picture cut.

> "It's easier for me to focus on the footage if it is a 'compare and contrast' situation."

Tom McArdle, Spotlight: My process is similar to Fabienne's. I like to cut a scene together pretty quickly, at first relying mostly on the circled takes. I go with my instincts as far as what shots to play certain beats in. Once I have a rough scene cut together, then I go back and thoroughly check all the other footage against what I already have. It's easier for me to focus on the footage if it is a "compare and contrast" situation.

Once I have a good cut of a scene, then I try to step away from it and not look at it for a few weeks. During the Spotlight rough cut, I had more time than with past films, since it was a longer shoot. So I had the opportunity to go back after a month or two and look again at scenes I had cut early on, which is always useful. You always get a little more critical and objective about your work when you haven't seen it for a while.

Billy Fox, Straight Outta Compton: My perspective is a little different. I'll look at all of it—circled take or not. Even if the director said he loved the last take, does it really mean that he loves every performance and every moment in the whole take? What does a printed take really mean? I recognize the fact that the director liked that take, so I'm conscious to see what's good in it, but in no way do I feel obligated to necessarily use that as my "money take." Building the first cut of a scene is probably my least favorite part of editing. Building the body: finding the takes that you kind of like even if there's no rhythm to it, it's just a performance cut, and it's ugly as shit. I hate that process. But once I have a body: a beginning, middle and an end, now I resettle in my chair and I go to town. I start working from the top, and I know this is good, and I'm working the rhythm of the scene, and then I go to the top and do it again and again and then I work on some reactions. Then, "Oh, I'm not liking this take now." It's just a process. I look at it like a sculptor where you just have a glob of clay and you add an arm and take a step back and then add another arm, and I just build it that way. Now that I have a whole body with a head, a body and two arms, I can start finessing, and that's where the real magic starts. I don't come away from dailies knowing what takes I'm going to use. My mind doesn't work that way. I just start, and the momentum will dictate what I should or shouldn't do.

Hullfish: Do you find that the most important part of just starting is finding that first shot?

> "Beautiful shots are bullshit if they're ultimately taking away from the drama."

Billy Fox: No. Not necessarily. The eventual first shot often shows its face later in the process. I get a scene where I'm relatively happy with it, and what I often do is I go back to dailies, and I create a sequence that I call "Golden Moments." I just start to re-look at it with a different eye. I know the scene better. I know the characters better. I'm looking at performances, but that's not the number one thing. I'm looking for moments. It's little beats that I really think are cool or interesting. I'll come away with—depending on the scene—20 or 30 little moments. Then I take those elements and I try to put them in and I find of the 20, I probably only use 4 or 5. You wish you could put in more, but you have to be true to the drama. Beautiful shots or interesting photography are bullshit if they're ultimately taking away from the drama.

Hullfish: Amen. Preach it brother.

Billy Fox: If you have a way to include some of them, and they punctuate something or they somehow make a transition, that's a good thing. But if it's just a beautiful rack focus, get rid of it. Sometimes the director will say, "Oh I had a great shot where the thing …" and I say, "Yeah, I know. I saw it. I tried to put it in and it didn't work." And he'll say, "Come on, let's try it." I'll sit there and try it, and he'll say, "Kind of doesn't work, does it?" "No."

> "It's a matter of choosing the best place to be, moment by moment."

Mike Hill: I'll do a quick scan through the bin and then dive in and put it together. What I love about the Avid is you can just try so many things quickly, and I don't worry about cutting it smoothly the first time through. I like to assemble it and get the best moments in there and then go back through it and smooth it out later. My approach has evolved a little bit with each movie. I can get through things quicker each time and not waste as much time as I used to.

Joe Mitacek, Grey's Anatomy: I agree with Mike. I just dive right in. That's because I'm comfortable with the show. You don't have time to make a meal out of every scene, so if it's just two people walking up to a nurse's station, that's just a scene where we just try to hit a story beat and move on. There's only so much time in the day. In other scenes I'm looking for the most interesting little flecks of footage that may have been something with the cameras adjusting, like a cool little rack, really quickly. And I think, "I could just use that little piece there somewhere," so I'm just kind of filing those away.

Hullfish: Kinetic little moments.

Joe Mitacek: Yeah, kinetic moments. That's a great term for it.

Hullfish: Leo, you learned your approach during the "cut on film" days too, right?

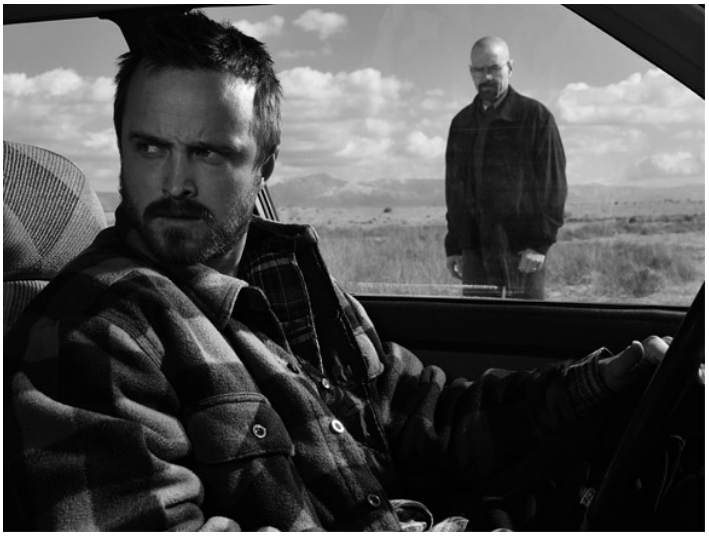


Image 2.7 Aaron Paul and Bryan Cranston in AMC's Breaking Bad. Courtesy of Sony Pictures Television.

Leo Trombetta, Mad Men: The first three films I worked on were cut on a flatbed where, of course, making selects was necessary and a great time saver. Now, with everything accessible in the click of a mouse, I like the freedom to regularly move from take to take, judging each moment against the others. Having read the scene to understand its intent, I look at the material and choose the shot that I feel will open the scene best. Then, it's a matter of choosing the best place to be, moment by moment. Of course, I often have to make adjustments based on my not having a shot I would like or because of a performance that is either so compelling that you can't cut away or, conversely, so lacking in emotion that you have to protect the actor and convey the emotion through other means—either by judicious cutting around the weaknesses or sometimes by taking more emotional line readings and placing it in their mouths.

Hullfish: What's your approach to cutting a basic scene?

Lee Smith: Before I edit a scene, I would have viewed it in dailies the night before with the director. I use that time to not only watch the footage but talk about what's coming and what's happened and any editorial problems or concerns with coverage. Sometimes you don't get that luxury, and I miss out on that opportunity to discuss the shoot, which I still believe is a vital part of the process. The next morning I come in and open it up and just start cutting. I'd normally start with the master shot and look at it and remember what I liked about it. I don't really take notes. I have a good mem-

ory of what I like and what I don't like. Then I very quickly put the scene together and then refine it.

Using Select Reels

Hullfish: Eddie, at the top of the chapter, you talked about the extreme shooting ratios you sometimes deal with. How do you wrangle that much footage?

Eddie Hamilton: I stick all the useful footage on a timeline in rough story order. I use Clip Color in Avid in the sequence, so I'll color the subclips based on the part of the story, or the character, so that I start building up a rainbow of color so I can see how much of each character I have. For example, if one character is orange and another character is green and another character is blue. And then what types of shot, so the wides, the mediums, the tights all go on different layers of the timeline. I go through and watch everything meticulously, and I put it in rough story order regardless of how long it is, so I may get the 15 hours of skydiving in Kingsman down to about an hour and 40 minutes. Then you watch and refine and throw out even more and you get it down to 40 minutes, and then you keep going and you get it down to 15 minutes. It's the process of figuring out what is the best footage that exists to tell the story and then starting to build the sequence and working out the most interesting juxtaposition of images and the pace and energy of the scene, and allowing certain shots to breathe, and certain shots to be more exciting and quicker and shorter, and make sure the audience understands the stakes of the action sequence, and the geography of it, and why the characters have to succeed or fail. That is crucially important. If the audience doesn't understand what the characters are doing in the action sequence or what their goals are or what the repercussions are if they fail, then there's no emotional attachment, and people will just disengage, so all of that stuff is critical to set up and then keep an eye on.

In an action sequence, I create selects reels and slowly piece the sequence together—always working without any sound. Just working silent: imagining music.

> "I never watch rushes as an entirely passive exercise. It's a waste of time."

Hullfish: Jake, we've got selects reel guys and non-selects reel guys. Which camp are you in?

Jake Roberts, Brooklyn: I use the selects reel concept, but I call it a "palette." Anything I like, I throw into a timeline and I try to keep that timeline chronological. So I

never watch the rushes as an entirely passive exercise, because it can take four hours to watch the rushes for a single scene, and at the end of it all you have is your memory or notes of what you liked. I find it's kind of a waste of time. So by the time I've watched all the rushes for a scene, I've got maybe five versions of every line in my palette and then, like a piece of marble, I just chip away until I've distilled it down to a cut. Maybe the flow's wrong or the grammar, but at that point you can make objective decisions about the scene and change some of your original choices.

Eddie Hamilton: I have my assistants start building up a massive selects reel for each scene, a huge timeline of every single line of dialogue delivered chronologically from every different camera angle, so I can see all of the wides, all of the mediums, all of the tights. And then, I have each shot size on a different layer on the timeline. So all of the wides on V1, then V2 for overs, V3 mediums, V4 tights, etc. for each line of dialogue, so when I want to audition all the different deliveries of a single line I can just click on it and watch the 40 deliveries for that line.

Hullfish: What's your approach, Kirk?

Kirk Baxter, Gone Girl: If Fincher (director, David Fincher) does a pretty elaborate camera move, it's usually because he wants to see it (in the final film), so I'll put little markers to say, "I'll be on this shot for this moment in time." Then I know it's free-range for everything around it. Then I'll get into the weeds with all the nitty-gritty of performances before and after those camera moves. Like, if I've got a two shot and a single on a certain actor's face and it's a three-minute scene, but in the middle of that scene, there's a camera move from here to there, I know I don't have to scrutinize all of their performances for that camera move part. I can safely be in the coverage of the wide shots. I have my assistants cut the dailies into sequences back to front. I look at the last one first and work my way backwards. Because if I look at it front first,

I say, "That one's good … oh, that one's good too …" but if I look at it backwards, I can usually see it deteriorate, and I end up with a more focused selection.

Hullfish: Then do you actually work from the selects reels, or do you just use them for screening purposes.

> "Instead of trying to judge one shot that's three minutes long, I'll just be judging tiny beats."

Kirk Baxter: No. I work from the selects reels. The very first thing I'll do is take a look at every single angle that he shoots for a scene so I have an idea of the movement of the scene, and if he's got close-ups, big close-ups of objects and things, I know where the audience needs to be directed. So after I've watched everything and have an understanding of it, then I'll look at the last take of each scene and mark it up for breakdowns by my assistants. So if it's a three-minute scene that has 30 lines, I'll start doing add edits in each spot that I think an edit would naturally take place. So instead of now watching a master as a one-take piece, I'll watch it as probably eight chunks. And then I'll have every take separated the same way and joined together. So now instead of trying to judge one shot that's three minutes long, and it's impossible to remember perfectly each little moment, I'll just be judging tiny beats next to each other, and it's really easy to determine when somebody nails a particular part of it.

Hullfish: I love that method. I'm going to have to steal that. That's great.

Kirk Baxter: Then after I've selected everything, I'll assemble it all together so that for any particular line, there might be three takes of that line in the master, three takes of that line in an over-the-shoulder, three takes in a two shot, three takes in a close-up for every beat in the scene. I'll play that down—it might be a 3-minute scene, but now it's 12 minutes of dailies. Then I'll share that with David, and he'll go through it and say, "Great … nope, yup … good" and then, once I've got that feedback from him, I cut it together. And after I put it together, I may have to go back to the dailies if I'm missing something. It's laborious, but it gets there in the end.

Hullfish: So the dailies as individual clips and their organization in the bin is not that important to you, because you're almost always working from some sort of selects reel or cut-down?

Kirk Baxter: Most of the time, correct. But when I return back to dailies, they're all broken up into little bite sized chunks anyway, so it's really easy to go back and review and double-check that you've got the right bit of something because you don't have to scrub for it. So it's a massive amount of labor up front as the dailies are coming in, but it makes the back-end very simple. It works really well for Fincher and the style of how he shoots. I can't say that it would work for every director, but it certainly does for him.

Hullfish: Dan, what's your approach?

> "What I try **not** to do is build a selects reel and shave it into a scene."

Dan Zimmerman, Maze Runner: Scorch Trials: Basically, what I'll do is string out the dailies in a sequence and hit play, and I watch every single frame from sync clap to when they turn the camera off of every take. I make general notes in my head. Then I typically write the takes that I liked the most, and I'll re-visit those takes. In the timeline I'll put little markers and I'll make notes of what I liked. I'll create a new timeline and then string the selected takes into it and use that to pull from. What I try not to do is build a selects reel and shave it into a scene. I use the selects reel as inspiration, and when I start cutting, using those select takes first, the scene takes shape from there. I go back to my scene bins, and I cut from those because I know that, say, take 4 had the best opening. So I'll lay that in my timeline for my first shot and then go to all the other subsequent shots just to refresh my memory, to see why I didn't choose those, then I pick the next piece. I tackle a scene differently every time.

Hullfish: Can you transpose that approach to doing the complex big action scenes that are in so many of the movies you've edited? Or do those scenes require a different approach?

> "The storytelling part comes in and I think, 'What are we trying to say here?'"

Dan Zimmerman: Yes actually, because what I end up doing, depending on how many cameras there are—like the latest installment of Die Hard—for every car crash there were 10 cameras—so you literally had 10 different ways to view that one small section of action. I find in a scenario like that, you need to find the moments that are really impactful, and then I'll create a selects timeline that turns into the cut. It's the only way to really see everything you'd need. I'll watch everything: all the cameras, all the stunts, all the takes, and create a section of action for A, B and C cameras. But I'll get a timeline of action and duplicate it and start stripping away what are the weaker of the three, or the two angles of an individual piece of action, and see what I'm left with. Then the storytelling part comes in, and I think, "What are we trying to say here?" It's a piece of action, but what story are we telling?

Mike Hill: For a typical dialogue scene, I just dive in. If I have a big set-piece scene or a big action scene or a big dialogue scene with a lot of people talking, I will do a selects roll that I can work off of that makes it easier to handle.

Hullfish: And when you do that, do you edit ON that selects reel, or do you pop it in your source monitor and use it as a source?

Image 2.8 Fred Raskin in the Hateful Eight edit suite.

Mike Hill: When I build the reel, I'll just use sections of takes and build it out. I try to keep them in some kind of script continuity. Then I will cut from that. I use it as a source.

> "I'm leaving myself a bread-crumb trail with my selects roll."

Dan Hanley: I do a combination. I figure out how I'm going to cut the scene—and to me, like Mike said, after you find that first shot, it starts to roll for me. I've got my cut going, and I've got my selects going at the same time on my record side. So then, if I like something, or if I want to add something later, I'm kind of leaving myself a bread-crumb trail with my selects roll. I may even have multiple selects rolls on my record side. I may string 15 line readings on a certain take, based on resets or what the director's looking for. So out of that 15, I may like 5 of them. I'll string those all together in my selects roll and see how it flows based on what I'm doing in the previous coverage on the actors. Then 5 takes become 3, and then I run those 3 takes against the rest of the cut until I find the one. Other times I know the one take that I like, and I'm moving on. Then, when the movie's not in scene form anymore and it's in movie form, then I'll double back and take a look at some of those other takes again because your sensibilities change.

Hullfish: Julian, is your approach similar?

> "If I hit a stumbling block on a scene, I'll jump to another scene. I work in drafts."

Julian Clarke, Deadpool: I really have two different tacks that I use depending on how many dailies I've been given. My normal process: watch all the dailies, throw down a couple of selects on the timeline and start building it linearly forward. I agree with the people that watch the takes backwards because generally speaking the director has made adjustments after each take, and the best material is in the latter half of the shooting … not always. But if I use this very thorough approach—if I have three or four hours of stuff—makes it likely that I'm going to fall behind. I have a whole other approach that I take if there's a whole lot of material that's been shot, because I do pride myself on keeping up with production. The other approach is that you just dive into it. You go to the circled takes and the later takes and lay out a foundation of the major selects of the major coverage. Then, depending on how fast that cuts together, I go back and review the material that I've skipped and see what I've missed. If I hit a stumbling block on that scene, I'll jump to another scene. I work in drafts, so there's a first or second draft on a scene, and then I'm moving to another scene. While I'm working on that other scene, an assistant editor can drop in early sound effects, and when I have early drafts on everything, then I go back and do further revisions, continuing to do passes so the director can see everything that he shot the previous day, fully assembled. It's like cooking with many pots on the stove.

Hullfish: Steven, do you rely on lined script notes?

Steven Mirkovich: I look over script notes and lined pages, but then I look at all of the film. I don't rely on other people's notes. I'm old school. I sit down with a legal yellow pad and make my own very detailed notes on every take for the sequence I'm about to cut. Funny thing is, when I'm done taking my notes, I almost never refer to them while initially cutting the scene. If there is a preferred take or notes from the director, I'll always look and consider those preferences first. Then I look at everything. I check the lined script pages to make sure I'm not missing anything. Then I just sit down and start cutting. I don't pull six takes of the same line and string them one after the other. I cut the scene in a linear way. I go from beginning to end, and when I'm done I'll decide if that's working for me. I'll decide if it's too cutty or not cutty enough. Is there a reaction that I'm missing? Is the flow right? Are the rhythms good? I look at it very closely until I feel like, "It's time to move on. I've got a lot more movie to cut." But the scene has to be working for me to put it aside. I don't do selects reels. I did when I was starting. I eventually felt that spending time putting a selects reel together was unnecessary double work and took time away from doing something else. We all have our own style and methods. Whatever works is good. Selects reels are useful if you're doing a comedy and it's one joke after another with multiple options and/or adlibs. A selects reel would be helpful in that case to show a director who may want to make the call on a joke he wants to play. When we did The

Other Guys, I was brought in on that movie to do all the action sequences. I worked six months cutting the action sequences and the comedy that was in and around those sequences. Adam McKay was the director. His lead editor used ScriptSync to quickly access every joke or option, one after the other. Many films don't have the budget to allow them to use ScriptSync since it takes a lot of manpower to prepare a scene, so a selects reel is another way to go. If you're dealing with more of a conventional scene, I think a selects reel is overkill.

> "We all have our own style and methods. Whatever works is good."

Hullfish: Margaret, are you in the selects or non-selects reel camp?

Margaret Sixel, Mad Max: Fury Road: As I look through dailies I start pulling bits out and stringing a whole lot of shots together. I have a rough idea in my head and can't wait to get the scene into a workable shape.

Steven Sprung: I developed a system of basically building the sequence with multiple takes. So, if I say, "I like that little piece for that line of dialogue," drop it in my timeline, and then I'll find another take, "Oh, I like that one too." So, I'll end up with a scene that's five times as long as it's going to end up later, with multiple takes strung out one after the other, basically building a selects reel. Seeing them play in quick succession can be a very effective way to compare performances. I have an idea of which takes I like best as I'm doing that and even put locators in the sequence, but then when I go back and review the takes, I often change my mind. Sometimes, I put the scene together just for performances, and it's a bunch of jump cuts. Then, I actually start editing the scene.

Kelly Matsumoto: Actually, I do that too. I pull a lot of selects and make select sequences. When I run through them all, I pick the best of those, then I hone those down to selects of selects. It really changes when you see them like that, and then again when they're in the sequence. Sometimes I do the layers, V2 and V1. And different scenes you approach different ways, too.

Clearly, there are a lot of ways editors approach a scene. Many of these approaches have similarities to each other. And many editors vary their approach to a scene depending on the type of scene it is, the style of the movie, and even just to mix things up or as inspiration strikes. Methods for these editors also evolved as they interacted with other editors or experimented with new methods.

I hope this chapter has inspired you to approach a scene in a new way and to see the strengths, weaknesses and benefits of a number of methods that you can explore the next time you sit down and are faced with an empty timeline.

The next chapter is about the editor's stock in trade: pacing and rhythm.

Chapter 3
Pacing and Rhythm

Ask an editor to name their sine qua non skill and "pacing and rhythm" is the phrase that will probably top the list—or it would be if he or she knew any Latin. In this chapter, we'll discuss pacing and rhythm only as it applies between shots and internally to a scene. I sometimes refer to this as micro-pacing. Pacing and rhythm are also used to describe the overall pacing and story rhythms of the larger film. I sometimes refer to this as macro-pacing. Micro-pacing and macro-pacing are actually quite different in methodology, execution and theory. The two ideas are not completely detached from each other, though. Each type of pacing and rhythm informs and affects the other. The larger concept of macro-pacing is discussed separately in this book in the chapter after this one, called Structure.

It is probably obvious that cinematic pacing and rhythm can be discussed and analyzed in terms of musicality and using analogies to music. There is not only a tempo tapped out by the musician's foot or by the conductor, but there is also the tempo from one section of the composition to another.

Editors discuss pacing and rhythm as primary ways that they ply their art. But how does the rhythm of an edit, or the pacing of shots, matter to the art of editing?

Why not just cut three-second shots one after another for an entire video? Why not just put a music bed under your video and cut on the second or fourth beat over and over and over? That's rhythm, right?

Maybe we can learn something from one of our creative colleagues in the other arts.

A few other art forms use rhythm and pacing. Music is the obvious one. This parallel probably explains the reason for the high percentage of editors I know who are musicians, including me.

Another art form heavily reliant on pacing and rhythm is writing.

A brilliant writer, Gary Provost, developed a fantastic example of rhythm and pacing in writing in this great mini-essay on his website, garyprovost.com. I have broken it

up to look a little more like shots in a vertical timeline.

This sentence has five words.
Here are five more words.
Five-word sentences are fine.
But several together become monotonous.
Listen to what is happening.
The writing is getting boring.
The sound of it drones.
It's like a stuck record.
The ear demands some variety.

Now listen.

I vary the sentence length, and I create music.
Music.
The writing sings.
It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony.
I use short sentences.
And I use sentences of medium length.
And sometimes when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals–sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

—Gary Provost
(used with permission from his estate)

Great editing lessons can be derived from this writing lesson. I don't think the lesson is completely transposable, but I definitely agree with the main point, which is that when things are predictable and homogenous, they are boring.

Do I think that you should make every shot a different length? Absolutely not. If every note in a piece of music was a different length, it would be unlistenable. Music uses a combination of similar, repeated rhythms and changes in that rhythm to create something that is pleasing, surprising and interesting. As I edit, I try to keep this in mind. When pacing an edit, I have a clock going in my head as the shot plays. What that clock tells me depends on a lot of things. It depends on the length of the shot before it. It depends on the interest level or quality of the shot. It depends on the movement in the shot. It depends on the energy level of the voice over or the interview or on-camera delivery. It also depends on where in the video I am. Do I want to start fast

and slow down later? Or maybe I want to build in speed to a big finish? It also depends on the length of the entire piece. For example, while a series of sub-one-second edits may be sustainable for a 30-second promo, it is not sustainable for an hour long documentary. But I definitely don't want it all to be the same from start to finish. When I edit, I try very hard to not use all "five word sentences."

> "Any good storyteller has a sense of both rhythm and pacing."

Any good storyteller has a sense of both rhythm and pacing. My dad used to tell this particular ghost story around the campfire when I was a kid. It started slowly, mysteriously. His speech was slow. The exposition of the story was slow. It built a sense of mystery and expectation. But then, as he started to build towards the climax of the story, his sentences got shorter. His delivery got faster and faster. Then as the final revelation was about to occur … a pause for dramatic effect … and the release of suspense. All pacing and rhythms.

A joke is essentially just a very short story, and we all know that with a joke, timing is everything. Timing in this case is all about the pace of the telling and the rhythm of the release and punchline. Even a comic with a seemingly monotone delivery, like Steven Wright, has a tremendous sense of pacing as he sets up and reveals information. Many of the jokes have a lightning fast delivery of exposition followed by a paced delivery of multiple punchlines or points where the audience needs to come to a realization of something.

> "The audience needs some sense of both predictability **and** surprise."

So when you think about what it means to pace your edit or have rhythm, consider that this doesn't mean that you have the ability to make a cut on a beat. Consider that the audience needs some sense of both predictability and surprise. In music, pacing is often defined merely as tempo. Yet, tempo is merely the base time against which the rest of the music plays out.

The tempo of a piece of music may stay completely consistent throughout, but the music can still be paced, with sections of eighth or sixteenth notes followed by the release of a whole note or rest.

Dance has pacing and rhythm as well. Dancers and choreographers do not simply make a movement or step on every single beat. The beautiful flow of a well-choreographed dance is something we can all aspire to as editors. Dance rushes forward, then holds, then flows elegantly, then spins and drives. Some things happen on the beat, and there are times when beats go by with no motion … the movement is suspended for a moment, not arbitrarily, but in a deliberate, paced way. When has the audience had enough speed? When does the eye need to rest on a beautifully held form in preparation for the next rush of movement or subtle gesture?

Pacing is Musical

Hullfish: Joe, I saw that you are a classical composer whose music has been performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Is there something from your musical training that informs your editing? So many editors are musicians.

> "You have to be alive to the rhythm of things."

Joe Walker, Sicario: We should form a band. We could probably fill out the Royal Albert Hall! It's a very similar job, don't you think, Steve? Composing a piece of music is so similar in terms of joining small fragments together and making them all line up to "magnetic North." The best cinema, in my view, is that which takes into account a musical feel and structure and aligns it to performance and story. You have to be alive to the rhythm of things, not necessarily just the rhythm of film scoring.

Hullfish: I've discussed the idea of musicality and musical training with many editors. Do you have musical training?

Peter Chakos, Big Bang Theory: I play guitar and I'm a vocalist. Timing is all rhythmic and musical.

Hullfish: Jeff, what's informing your pacing and rhythm in either the action scenes or the dialogue scenes? Where do you make your cut?

Jeffrey Ford, Captain America: Civil War: Well that's a very elusive thing. Sometimes two frames one way or the other can ruin a cut, so it's amazing how sometimes you have cuts that are very robust. They can be cut anywhere, and it will still flow across, and it will make sense, and it'll still have its emotional content. Other times the transition has to be so precise you have to be on the ONE frame that makes that cut or that shot function. I wish there were a way to describe how to find those frames

or how long those dwells should be, but it's not math, it's poetry and it's rhythm and it's just like a drummer. A drum machine can play the drums, but a drummer is really playing the drums. It's the inaccuracies and the emotional variances that create the rhythm and the uniqueness of it. So it's a very tricky thing to learn, and it's the one thing that limits people from becoming editors: if you don't have that innate sense of rhythm and timing, especially when it comes to the musicality of dialogue and how long you need to dwell before the next person speaks, you can't learn that. You can find it by watching a lot of films and trying to get a feel for it, but if it's something that you can't understand intuitively, it's difficult to become a good editor in general. It's a little bit like playing an instrument.

Hullfish: I would argue that the rhythm is not something determined by the location of a single cut but is something that appears after multiple cuts—like a drummer, you don't have a rhythm with a single drum beat … there has to be a sequence of drum beats to have rhythm. Sometimes even four beats isn't enough to determine a rhythm, because there could be a pause between the next sequence of four beats—like the rhythm of a horse galloping. Dan, I almost feel like I've got an internal clock of when I've been on a shot long enough. How do you determine that internal pacing of a scene or action sequence, shot to shot?

> "You need peaks and valleys and dynamics within the action itself, so that it's not 'at ten' all the time."

Dan Zimmerman, Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials: Like you said, you do have a sort of internal clock, especially with action. I feel the moment that a shot ceases to pique your interest is the moment when you want to change the dynamic. I've found that to be a great first step in cutting an action sequence. In Die Hard 5 the car crash sequence through Russia was humongous; it was a very long sequence. Thankfully, within the body of it, there were different variations of the crashes and how they related to each other that kept your attention. Much like Scorch Trials, one of our big challenges was that Wes loved the idea of really long action set pieces. So how do you manipulate it? And I think it truly is having peaks and valleys and dynamics within the action itself, so that it's not "at ten" all the time, but even when you're "at four," it's still engaging.

Hullfish: And that's part of the skill of pacing, right? It's not that you're going at an exact, measured pace the whole time, but that you know when to step on the gas and when to let up, so that the audience can either catch their breath or absorb something or whatever and then the pace is going to pick back up again. How much do you try

to cut and trim and move the story along as quickly as possible, and how much do you allow the audience to breathe and absorb information they've been given? Something I noticed in Brooklyn was that there were many scenes that played for another entire shot after dialogue was done. There's a shot where—after the dialogue between Saoirse and one of the other girls in the boarding house—the camera lingers for a moment on the other girl as she considers the conversation.

> "There's something more authentic in a moment if there isn't a cut."

Jake Roberts, Brooklyn: In general terms, and it's a writer's concept, but you want to come in the room as late as possible and leave as early as possible. That's good writing and with editing, it goes along the same lines. So by the time someone's written it and someone's edited it, you sometimes are only in a scene for two parts of an exchange that maybe was initially 10 exchanges, and you've distilled it down to the absolute kernel of what it is. That didn't apply so much in this film. My attitude would always be if a shot is beautiful and the performance holds up and you aren't trying to make a dialogue edit then don't cut, because I think there's something more authentic in a moment if there isn't a cut, then you know that that moment hasn't been contrived by the editor. It feels more real.

> "To me, the picture editing has a musicality."

Dan Hanley, In the Heart of the Sea: To me, the picture editing has a musicality. There is a tempo. And if the tempo is correct, then when someone's scoring it, that scene will work. So there's something to the mathematics, to me at least. If you're right, then the guy scoring the movie will come to you and say it works. And if it's not, something's bumping, and that's all based on rhythm.

Billy Fox, Straight Outta Compton: That's right. It has always been fascinating to me. You're cutting to a rhythm—an internal music—and the mathematics work out. There is a great clip from Orson Welles talking about editing. He quotes Carlyle saying, "Anything you analyze close enough turns out to be musical." It's that old thing that I find so fascinating about music that you have a scene and it's working up to a point, then it's not working. So you work it some more until that part works. But if you don't watch the whole scene when you're fixing the end that's not working, you can screw up the musical rhythm. Sometimes it only takes moving an edit by one frame and the rhythm is back. It's like, when I do add a musical cue, very rarely do I start

adjusting picture edits because of a hit on music. What I find fascinating, and I don't know the real reason for this, as if you're doing the editing on an internal music rhythm—music is not included yet—then you add what you think is the right cue, it's amazing how often the edits just fall right in line. It's as if you cut it to the music. Not all of them, but a lot of them. Or you have to find another cue because the first one's not working, but it's too bad because the beats were hitting at the right place. But when you find another cue you find that the other piece works the same way. I don't believe in being really on the nose with stuff—re-cutting stuff where I trim things so it hits the beat. Maybe on a scene change, if a swell is happening a little too early, but more times than not, I'll adjust the music instead of the picture.

> "Anything you analyze close enough turns out to be musical."

Hullfish: There's a lot of action in Deadpool, but there's also a lot of comedy. Both of those things are critically dependent on timing in very different ways. I'd love to hear your thoughts on jumping between those mentalities. Were you like an actor needing to put on a different persona to cut one and then cut the other? They seem to be very different muscles to flex.

Julian Clarke, Deadpool: Oh yeah. It's very different. Absolutely. They're very different instincts. Editing action is interesting. I always feel like I'm learning more about it the more I do it. But there really is something very musical about editing action. I think when you first start editing action you're like, "I'll find the best bits and the best stunts, and I kind of put them together in a way that's very kinetic and there it is." But often, when you do that, you find that the flow of the action is emotionally unsatisfying. There's a journey and an arc with rises and falls where your characters are winning and losing, so sometimes you have to re-order things to have this correct musical flow to the action. Then comedy is really this very micro-sense to what is the rhythm of this joke and how much of this character's reaction do I need to see, and then sometimes this line doesn't work, we need a different punch-line to make this pay off. Then in this movie we're often joking in the middle of action or in the middle of drama, and then it's like, "How much of this can we get away with before the scene falls on its face?"

Hullfish: Jeff, how do you know your rhythm is right?

> "You have to literally create a song that is visual and sonic that tells a story."

Jeffrey Ford: A lot of times, if a scene plays without music, it's going to play great with music. You just feel it. It really flows. It has a groove to it. You can almost hear the music as you see the cuts, like synesthesia, where you can see music and hear visuals. Your senses jump between the two, and it feels musical. Sound effects and movement inform visual edits in a rhythmic way, so in other words, there's picture cuts, but there's also percussive sounds in a fight scene, for instance. A punch is an event that the audience will react to because they're seeing it and hearing it. And a body hitting the ground and a door getting kicked down and the sound of metal whoosh and a jump. All of those things are musical events where you're varying the tension and the tone—all those things need to vary in pitch and tone. You have to literally create a song that is visual and sonic that tells a story.

Hullfish: David, you said you think many editors overcut. How do you know that you are cutting a scene with the proper pace? Or if you go in to doctor someone else's pace, how do you know that it's wrong?

David Wu, Hard Boiled: It's all about the gut feeling. Other people cannot have your gut feeling, and you cannot have other people's gut feeling. Gut feeling is something I learned from the very famous editor, Dede Allen. Her quotable quote is: "Cut with guts." When you cut with guts, you're not shackled by rules or theories or formula. You are there to experiment. You try to be bold. Gut feelings have to be right. When I first cut the movie, before I sit down I know what kind of movie, what genre. I know what kind of vehicle I'm driving. Like if I'm in a Ferrari or a station wagon or an old mule. Sometimes I prefer cutting the whole movie from scene 1 to the end. But of course, a lot of times you cannot cut it chronologically. So in that case I will individually treat each scene with its appropriate and proper pacing or pulse or tempo. Then I join all of the scenes together to see if they are in conflict or are they all with the same tempo or are they too fast or too slow. Then I will pick the moments and the scenes where I want a little highlight or a peak or a valley. I recommend a more jazzy rhythm. It is not a monotone rhythm. Sometimes you are going up the hill, and you find moments to come down the hill. You come down the hill and pick up speed.

Hullfish: With a jazz musician, the beat is not always precise. Sometimes the note is played behind the beat, sometimes in front of the beat. Leading or dragging the tempo.

David Wu: Yes yes yes. Unpredictable. You have to feed the audience exactly what they want. They will be offended if you don't give them the beat or the mood, and you don't give it to them unless you have a purpose—creating a tension or a build-up or it sets them up well. But if you don't feed them well, they get offended. I always think of an invisible music track in my mind. I'll tell you a couple of amazing stories.

One time I cut a Hong Kong movie about a bunch of killers. They are in a competition. They are sitting at one long table, and they are in a competition to disassemble a gun and assemble it back together. It's a lot of cuts, and after I cut it, I laid on a music track and amazingly there is an understood rhythm with my cuts that it completely matched with the temp music. (Wu sings a percussive driving tempo.) It's RIGHT on the cuts. I was shocked. I might have an invisible music machine in my mind.

Hullfish: In my interview with Lee Smith, he said that when he cut without temp music and delivered it to the composer, the composer came back and told him that he was cutting at 97 beats per minute perfectly.

David Wu: Yup! I learned a lot along the way with the great masters and great filmmakers. And I found out that with The French Connection, they actually cut the scene with a piece of music and then they took away the piece of music, and the audience reads the scene with the music tempo subconsciously in their minds. Do you know which cue they're using? "Black Magic Woman." (Sings) Not the opening theme everyone knows from that song, it's the second half (singing) …

Hullfish: How am I going to transcribe this? (Laughs.)

David Wu: It was amazing. I actually used that a couple of times later on. I cut the boat chase scene in John Woo's Killer using the same method and then I took away the music, and in the movie all you hear is just the sound effect of the two speed boat engines (Wu imitates the cutting and revving of two speedboat engines). But subconsciously you can feel the beat of the music.

Hullfish: Do you remember the piece of music you cut to?

David Wu: "Born to be Wild."

Hullfish: That's great.

David Wu: (Singing) "Get the motor running. Head out on the highway!" That's why I have not had a day in my editing life that is a boring moment. Every day you learn something new.

Hullfish: Amen. That's the way to keep yourself fresh.

What Determines Pacing?

> "You cut for dramatic reasons. You cut to shift emphasis."

Lee Smith, Spectre: I always say to the guys I work with, "You've got to have a reason to cut. Don't just cut." Anyone can do that. You sit there and you're bored, so you cut. You're bored, so you cut. It's terrible. It's not a good reason. You cut for dramatic reasons. You cut to shift emphasis. You cut for a reaction that's stronger than a line. That's how you cut in my opinion.

Hullfish: I was just thinking of a scene that I cut recently where I cut back to the wide in the middle of the scene—an emotional scene—but the reason was that the conversation hit a wall, and I wanted to show that both parties were at an impasse … basically at a loss for words.

Image 3.1 Lee Smith, editor of the James Bond film, Spectre.

Lee Smith: That illustrates the point. You were cutting for a reason. And I just did a scene on a film where I cut back to the wide shot in the middle of the scene too, to show the danger of the environment. As you just said, you cut to the wide to show two characters who've come to a pause in their dialogue and, rather than cut to two singles, you cut wide. But that's the thing. There has to be a reason.

Hullfish: Brent, is finding that rhythm like focusing? "Trim too long, then trim too short, and back somewhere in between and now I've got it?"

> "You want the waves of laughter to build so that they crest at the biggest joke."

Brent White, Ghostbusters: Yeah. Sometimes it's not only the picture, because on the Avid I've got that waveform monitor up the whole time. I can see what the sound is doing. I can see the air, and if I can collapse the air, it's about bringing things together, like there's moments when Will (actor, Will Ferrell), who's like the most amazing improv person … sometimes it's just about pulling up the little moments where he's thinking of the next thing. He's so quick, but it becomes about making it as realistic and life-like as possible. And that's what makes some of those films and jokes work amazingly well, because you've made them as human and fleet-footed and quick-of-thought as you can. What happens is with the double coverage, shooting from both sides, is you capture the interaction of what's happening in real time, and then all you have to do is just micro-surgery, and it just rolls. That's the other thing: how fast can you get it to go? Sometimes I feel like it's a bit of a rollercoaster, you want the waves of laughter to build in a way so that they crash and crest at the biggest joke, so you'll see the first joke and the second joke, and it's all about how to create that big guffaw or release at the end of the bit. And it's so fun to sit in a preview audience and watch them ride that wave. It's super fun.

Hullfish: Steven, how do you know you have the rhythm right?

> "The film usually dictates what you should be doing to it."

Steven Mirkovich, Risen: Avoid stutters. You can create stutters by staying too long or by artificially "rapid firing" your cuts through the scene. You can force the pace on something, whether it's slowing it down or speeding it up, but if it feels like a stutter … you've failed. Your audience will feel it too. They may not know how to identify what they don't like, but they know it doesn't work. The film usually dictates what you should be doing to it. At least it does to me. I see it in films all the time—where I'll think, "Whoah! What happened there?" Why did we get off them so fast? Why didn't we sit on them for just another beat? You need to allow the audience to exhale so that when you do cut, it's got more impact. I let you exhale so I can punch you in the gut while you've got no air in your lungs. Again, it really is about rhythms that

editors need to pay attention to, and if they're successful in accomplishing that, they make a better movie.

> "The pacing is always in service to the story."

Clayton Condit, Voice from the Stone: A scene is a dance; how the actors relate to each other. I'll base my first cut on the actors' performances because that's hopefully the most natural, but then you can step back and say, "Let's let that moment breathe." Maybe you want to create an interruption that wasn't there, or who you're on for a particular line, for emphasis. What's more important: the delivery or the reaction? Go back to the scene objective. What are we trying to accomplish? That really dictates who's on camera, and if you want to make a moment slightly more awkward, then you open the track up and let it breathe a little. So it really is instinct or feel. A lot of times you'll step back, and a scene will feel rushed or sometimes you milked it too much. Then you adjust.

Hullfish: The pacing is always in service to the story. With Vinyl, what is informing pace in this TV show, Kate? There's a chaos to it. There's a rock 'n' roll attitude to it.

Kate Sanford, Vinyl: Well, the first week or so I was there, Terry did say to us—and I rarely get an edict or style bible—"We don't want this to be a static period piece. We don't want this to look like Mad Men—which we love. We don't want this to look like Boardwalk Empire. We don't want that pace. We want this to be really fun and paced up." In the writers' room they had posted some big cards saying: "Funny. Sexy. Rock and Roll." But we deliberately set out to make something that felt different than Boardwalk Empire. Some people think that was really slow; I hope it wasn't too slow for everybody, but I think it was very specific.

Hullfish: With Boardwalk Empire?

Kate Sanford: Yeah. Also, we're all such huge fans of Scorsese, so, we've all tried to absorb his rhythms and strategies. Naturally, we're looking to those types of rhythms and trying to do fun little jump cuts and use music, the way that he's traditionally used music to score scenes and punctuate moments and make it fun and make the music kind of jump out as the score. And then, we're also looking at his Vinyl pilot every once in a while.

Hullfish: Leo, how do you know you're "in rhythm"?

Leo Trombetta, Mad Men: Pacing is always an issue when I'm editing a scene. Sometimes an actor will pause a little longer than you'd like while delivering a line and, in a case like that, rather than cut away from him to pace it up, I often rely on two effects in particular: the fluid morph and the split screen. The fluid morph allows you to make a jump cut and then "morph" both sides of the cut so that the jump is imperceptible. I use the split screen in conjunction with the fluid morph when there is someone else in the frame whose face or position would noticeably shift at the jump. This of course only works if the camera is steady or, in the case of a hand-held close-up, if you choose a spot to make your cut where the camera would be in the relatively same position.

Hullfish: Mark, in Jungle Book I want to talk about the example of the pacing in the comic discussion between Baloo and the other animals as Baloo is waiting for Mowgli to knock down the honeycomb. They're firing away very quickly.

Mark Livolsi, The Jungle Book: Jon (director, Jon Favreau) had this specific idea that he wanted it to be a little like screwball comedy. It was all Jon and the performers. I just made it as funny as I possibly could, editorially. The animators did the rest. The first versions of it were a lot looser. That scene was one of the last things I did editorially—turn it into something rapid fire and I think a lot funnier.

Hullfish: Kelley, what is affecting your sense of shot-to-shot pacing?

Kelley Dixon, Breaking Bad: Weird answer here … but … my heart. I'm a "cut-by-feel" editor. I don't cut by 2 frames here, 8 frames there … I cut by "a little trim here" … "Nope. A little more"—that kinda thing. I've always wondered about people who could think in frames and estimate like that. Vince Gilligan explained his process to me on Breaking Bad once. He said he thinks in fractions of a second: 24 frames per second, 12 for a half, 8 for a third, etc. I just do it by feel. I tend to cut long in an editor's cut. Letting looks and moments play out longer. Then they get trimmed back throughout the post process. But I also like to emphasize sudden moves or cut in the middle of words. It makes things play more fluid, natural and propulsive.

> "Parts of an actor in foreground lends energy to the favored actor's shot."

Hullfish: What are some of your cues or rules of making a cut? When do you cut?

Kelley Dixon: Now I'm giving tricks away! I don't have any rules except make sure it's not dull or stodgy or predictable. If an actor does any sort of emphatic behavior,

see if I can capitalize on it by making a cut there. I like to use wider coverage. Parts of an actor in foreground lends energy to the favored actor's shot. I like to use wide shots where you wouldn't expect them. My philosophy on Breaking Bad and Better Call Saul was that those super wide shots usually signified one of two things—loneliness or power. One character alone in an expanse—lonely or powerful. I don't care about crossing the line, but I believe every editor should be aware of when and why they do it. In other words … I'm not cavalier about saying I don't care about crossing the line. I think it can be a very useful skill in telling the story. One example would be to purposefully throw off viewers' equilibrium. Make things more frenetic, unsettling. I try never to cut like—dialogue … cut to reaction … more dialogue … cut to (wait for it …) reaction … (yawn!!)

I definitely like making propulsive cuts. Anything to capitalize on energy. It's also what I look for in assessing an assistant's editing.

Hullfish: Tom, I think many editors would think of Whiplash when it comes to pacing and rhythm. What was motivating that pace?

Tom Cross, Whiplash: The drum playing in Whiplash—the sound of it—has an inherent rhythm that sets a metronome in the minds of the viewers. Its very existence in a scene invites a relationship with the image and sets up a sonic pattern that the picture can answer. Damien (director, Damien Chazelle) wanted to play off of that and employ fast editing, jarring smash cuts and short insert shots coupled together to punctuate. He wanted the cutting to feel very swift and precise, almost as if the character of Fletcher was editing the film. At times, he really wanted the cuts to feel brutal and violent. He told me that he wanted the music scenes to feel like the boxing scenes from Raging Bull. But I don't think it was merely the fast cutting that grabbed people's attention. I think part of it was Damien's choice to apply these stylistic flourishes—flourishes more expected in an action film or sports film—to a story about jazz musicians. At the same time, however, Damien was very clear that only certain scenes should feel like that. He didn't want to impose this brutality or cold precision on every single scene. So it would really depend on what character we were cutting. When it came to scenes of Andrew and his girlfriend Nicole, Damien wanted the editing style to be much more traditional, slower and more romantic. The same is true of the early scenes with Andrew's dad. He wanted them to play classically and invisibly. The exception would be the dinner scene when all the family members are talking around the table, and the dad is there. That's a scene that starts off a certain way but very quickly escalates to a very fast paced, cold flurry of cuts. That's because Damien wanted it to feel ruthless and wanted to show how fast Andrew's comebacks were and how he was cutting his father down with the dialogue. But in general the scenes with

the other people—the dad and Nicole—were much more languid, whereas the scenes with Fletcher were snappy and violent.

> "A lot of the cues come from the actors, from the camera."

Hullfish: Stephen, with The Revenant, talk to me about the edit-to-edit stuff. How do you determine that pacing? What factors influence pace?

Stephen Mirrione, The Revenant: Again, this is where instinct plays a big factor. If I'm doing it right, I don't have to think about it too much. I just scrape away little by little until it feels right. A lot of the cues come from the actors, from the camera. If they are dialed in, you find the rhythm pretty quickly. What made this project difficult was that many of the individual scenes often had their pace dictated by external factors. The crane couldn't always move as quickly as a scene needed to be. So once we watched several scenes cut together, we noticed that all the scenes had almost the exact same rhythm, which was a rhythm dictated by the crane, which became monotonous very quickly. On Birdman most of the movie was shot handheld, so after a dozen takes, Alejandro could ask for one that was performed 10% faster. That was usually the take we'd use, but with this, even though the actors could have done it faster, the crane couldn't move more quickly. I had several tricks up my sleeve to increase the speed of a scene and create urgency, to give contrast when needed. And of course I had about 10 hours of second unit material, beauty shots, that could be used as a quick burst to create tension, anxiety or to slow things down poetically, to give the audience time to think and feel.

> "Always looking for progression in a sequence, with the character, the story or action."

Margaret Sixel, Mad Max: Fury Road: Most importantly, one is always looking for progression in a sequence, with the character, the story or action, even if by small increments. I always try to make each cut count. Sometimes one has no choice but to cut. Most of the shots in the exciting big set pieces, like the Death of the Excavator, were in the original design, but I played around with the frame rates. I did the same with the last shot of the War Rig at the end of the storm sequence. We kept lengthening the shot and fiddling with the fades to black. This is also true of the final stunt, the amazing roll of the War Rig at the end of the film.

Hullfish: Where does that rhythm come from?

Margaret Sixel: Rhythm comes from many things. It's definitely inherent in the coverage or the style of the film. I am very conscious of rising rhythms and building rhythm within a scene and the overarching rhythms of the film. I have learnt a lot of this from George. He loves talking about "staying on the wave." Actors too bring their own rhythms to dialogue scenes, and as an editor you want to be true to that. Occasionally you have to force the rhythms, but I think you can always tell. First time directors usually direct actors too slowly, as they think every moment is meaningful.

Jan Kovac, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: I cut with my gut, which is big. (Laughs) Then if it doesn't work, I try something else. Shoot from the hip first, to get the scene into some basic shape, then see where it lands and start refining, and refining.

Hullfish: One of my editing interests as you go through Whiskey Tango Foxtrot is these big jumps in time that you guys don't bother to prep the audience for. You just figure that after the first couple of skips, the audience gets used to the fact that that's the way the story is going to get told. Talk to me about how little story you need to let the audience in on or how little information is really necessary to parcel out to the audience to have them follow the story.

Glenn Ficarra, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: I think a lot of it is trial and error. As the editor or filmmaker, you are so spoiled objectively in the process. I like to give the audience a lot of credit for rolling with changes. I remember when we were young, and people said they couldn't follow along with Star Wars because it was cut so tight, and you watch it now and it's down-right slow. John (Ficarra's co-director, John Requa) likes to talk about how when we were in film school and you would watch Battleship Potemkin (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925), and it was cut so super fast. Even in film school in the 80s, it was still mind-bogglingly fast. And if you watch it now, you think, "No. It's not that fast." And I think it's like time-cuts and this cinematic language, and people are used to watching really short stuff and are used to all these different forms of media, and I think they are probably more adept than we think they are at rolling with those punches.

Hullfish: So often the pacing comes from the movement in the scene or the dialogue of a specific actor or character.

Tom McArdle, Spotlight: Well, hopefully, the director and the actors establish a good general pace on set. Then, once you are in the edit room, scenes usually are cut to be a little tighter than they were in the dailies. But not always. Sometimes you go the other way. In the early scenes with Marty Baron, since he is an outsider, I often gave

him an extra beat before he spoke, to set him apart. Others might talk fast or overlap, but he does not. So, even in his speaking rhythm, he is an outsider.

Hullfish: Joe, you said that with 12 Years a Slave that when you watched the first assembly of the film, you realized you needed to be ruthless in trimming things. So in that light, how did things like the hanging scene and the medium shot of Solomon staring into space at the end of the movie survive?

> "If you **don't** cut, then when you **do** cut, it delivers such a rhythmic weapon."

Joe Walker: It's a selection process whereby you keep the drive, not only in terms of time but also in terms of visual information. Where possible you try to make a different composition tell its individual story at the right time. If you take the kind of classic coverage of a TV movie—the establishing wide, a two shot and two singles—we all know that managing your ingredients to keep it visually stimulating and keep it driving is really key. You don't necessarily have to use that establishing wide shot at the beginning of the sequence. There might be a great dramatic way of using it much later. And, where possible, avoid repeating that shot. That's a delicate operation that takes place over the course of the whole movie. And how you "play" that scene changes through time as you see the context. Also, if you don't cut, then when you do cut, it delivers you such a rhythmic weapon in terms of editing. Although when you hold for 17 and a half minutes, like that dialogue scene in Hunger, you better make sure that the first cut after that is exactly in the right place (laughs), 'cause it's going to be felt very, very dramatically. The cuts seem to have much sharper edges than they do in a normal film.

Hullfish: I was just watching the "College" episode of The Sopranos that you cut and thinking about the pacing of things. Where there's breath and where there's not breath. To me, pace seems driven by performance.

Sidney Wolinsky, The Sopranos: Pacing has to do with your judgment within the scene and from scene to scene. Is it all performance? I don't know. It's personal taste. I tend to cut stuff really fast and then people tell me to slow it down. Then I go, "Gee, it's so much better now." I try to think twice when I pace scenes. Sometimes I'll pace it up and look at it and look at my old cut, and I think, "What the hell was I doing?" And I'll put it back the way it was. That's what you're doing the whole time: making those decisions cut by cut. How many frames do I leave on the end of this line and so on and so forth, and how long do I linger on this shot? It's not governed by performance. It's governed by your own judgment. You're cutting the scene and then you're

putting them together, and what I find is that the first time I put it all together and look at the whole show, I see all kinds of things that I didn't see within the scene. I'll say, "Oh boy, that goes too fast or that goes really slow." It gives you a whole different feeling of the pacing of the scene when you're looking at it continuously with the other scenes. It may be too long, but you want to make it play without taking stuff out. By "play" I mean you don't want people to think, "God, when is this scene going to be over?"

Hullfish: John, do westerns have their own unique sense of pace?

John Refoua, Magnificent Seven: The thing you can do in a western is that characters confront each other in the middle of the street, and everybody has their gun. You know that there is going to be violence. Everybody knows there is going to be violence, so that moment of waiting for it … with that anticipation, you can elongate that moment. As Antoine (director, Antoine Fuqua) said, "Torture the audience." They know it's coming. You just hold it back longer and longer and just when you think it's going to happen, you hold it back a little bit more. That is something that westerns are very good at. The good guy and the bad guy look at each other, and you've got all these close-ups. We had seven good guys and a few bad guys, so we could naturally take even more time. There is a sequence in the movie when the Magnificent Seven come back to town, and when I put it together, I thought, "Man, this is going to have to get shorter." But it never did. It worked, and everyone seemed to enjoy it.

Letting it Breathe

Hullfish: So often, we're talking about pacing a movie up—tightening it. That could be just my personal bias … but really, pacing also means opening the movie up to let it breathe at critical moments, or to let the audience absorb an emotional moment. Or sometimes the audience needs time to consider a new piece of critical information.

Mike Hill, In the Heart of the Sea: I don't think I worry about pacing much at all when I'm initially cutting a scene together. I pretty much feel like that's going to take care of itself when we get in to it with Ron (director, Ron Howard). Especially back when we were editing on film, it's better to leave it long and a little slower than it's going to be because it's easier to take away than to add back. That stays with me, even now that we're digital. Although I admit that cutting on the Avid, I do cut it tighter—more the way I think it should be—on the first pass.

Hullfish: I can understand that. But certainly, the movie can't constantly be paced to the nth degree. It needs to breathe.

> "What makes the movie interesting are the different tempos within it."

Dan Hanley: It needs to breathe once in a while. It does. Sometimes fast isn't better.

I'm basing my pacing on the story I'm telling and what's involved in that story. I cut based on the rhythm and the timing and the musicality of that scene. Within that movie, there's different phrases of music where some are fast paced and some are slow paced. What makes the movie interesting are the different tempos within it.

Eddie Hamilton, Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation: The opening sequence of Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation is a scene where Tom Cruise jumps on the wing of an A400 aircraft, which is taking off, because there are some chemical weapons that are inside that he has to stop from reaching their destination. I watched it with an audience in our first test screening, and I realized that the first two or three minutes of the scene I had slightly over-trimmed and it was running a little bit fast, and the audience wasn't quite engaging with the story. I didn't feel it, watching in the cutting room, but with an audience, I felt like "This is going too fast and I've over-cooked this." I didn't even mention it to the director. I just went ahead and allowed the scene to breathe ever so slightly so that stuff landed for the audience a little more. So all the information that they needed was just given to them a little bit slower, and then the next time we watched it, it just completely worked, and it was because I was really carefully paying attention to how they were reacting second by second through the opening minutes of the film, and I felt that I needed to address it.

Hullfish: What gave you the clue that you were going too fast instead of too slow?

Eddie Hamilton: Well, I could sense that they were not engaging in the story and not understanding what was at stake and what was going on or why certain things were happening because there weren't audible reactions or chuckles to certain things. You know how you can tell if the audience is enjoying it. People were just looking at the screen concentrating, and they weren't relaxing in to it. They weren't having their hand held enough. They were being dragged forward. I wasn't walking alongside them; I was kind of pulling them forward, and therefore they were having to do a little too much work. And I'm talking about maybe a total of maybe six or seven seconds added over the first two minutes. And it just made all the difference the next time we watched it. It landed and everything worked, so I'm constantly aware of that when I'm watching the movie with an audience, literally every minute of the film, I'm

acutely aware of the reactions. There's one place where we got a big laugh, and then Tom Cruise's line came in too quickly so I added an extra 18 frames of a beat after Simon Pegg said his line, and the laughter had died down just enough during that two-thirds of a second where the audience could pick up Tom's line. That made all the difference. So I'm always paying attention to that when there's a new fresh audience.

> "The 'dwells' are where the audience understands big moments. The 'dwells' are where the audience laughs."

Jeffrey Ford: Sometimes you do tighten stuff too much and have to dial it back a bit. In my experience, tighter isn't always better. As a matter of fact, a lot of times faster is bad. Sometimes faster is necessary, and sometimes audiences need faster, but a lot of times, the "dwells" are where the audience understands big moments. And in comedy, "dwells" are where the audience laughs. That's where you're giving them the permission to enjoy it. One of my favorite moments in the movie is where Cap kisses Agent 13 and then looks over to see his buddies—lethal assassins, superheroes—and they're so happy that their buddy finally gets kissed. The poor guy never gets a break. Finally he has a moment where he's got a girl, and they're just so proud of him, and it made me just smile because that—the pacing on that moment was dialed in completely by Joe and Anthony, and it's utterly perfect timing. I thought I had great timing when I cut that, and they had very specific ideas, and it just killed. That's why those guys are good. They didn't rip apart what we had constructed, they just adjusted it slightly and put it in the right rhythm, and boy did it play with an audience. So it doesn't take much. These are very subtle things. If somebody tells me to pace something up, that doesn't help me. I need to know what you want me to do to improve it.

Joe Walker: What can you do without? How spare can you make it? Years ago, I used to joke about an approach to cutting based on this long-running BBC radio show that's been going for 73 seasons or something, called Just a Minute. It's a panel show, and the guests are given a subject to talk about without hesitation, repetition or deviation for 60 seconds. Put a timer on now and try it! Even 20 seconds without repeating a word, "um-ing" and "er-ring," or making grammatical mistakes is a real challenge. So I would joke with directors that we should try to apply the rules of Just a Minute to their film. It took time to realize what a kind of really joyless approach that really would be. Repetition helps mark development, for themes to surface—I think of the countless little repeating patterns you find in Steve's films that are small signposts on the road. Deviation, well, some of my favorite moments in movies are some kind of

departure from the norm (In Synechdoche, an estate agent showing a buyer around a house that's on fire comes to mind). Most of all, hesitation is human, without it, communication becomes monotonous. You need time to ruminate and cogitate and build anticipation.

Pacing due to Screen Size

Hullfish: Fred, Hateful Eight was a very wide aspect ratio. With the width of the screen and the detail and beauty in the images, I felt like my eyes really needed time to drink it all in on each shot. Did that affect your pacing?

Fred Raskin, The Hateful Eight: Yes. Absolutely. Because of the clarity of the images, along with the beauty of the compositions, if there were moments where we didn't need to cut, we wouldn't. And frequently the question became, "What is the most impactful place to cut?" Because you're holding on an image that is so stunning, and you can see the depth of the performances in the characters' eyes. Cutting away, it didn't seem like we were going to gain anything from it. So we would have to be very careful about only doing it when it was going to have maximum impact.

Hullfish: Martin, do you notice that your pacing changes depending on the size of the screen you're monitoring?

Martin Walsh, Chicago: Yeah. It's an interesting one, that one. I think we all have a tendency to cut faster, the smaller the screen. You see more. It's the one opportunity you get from the beginning of the show until you screen your own cut, what we call the editor's cut, a couple weeks after we've wrapped shooting. That's the only time you're going to see it on the big screen. Then it's back to the television. They can make really nice televisions these days, but nothing replaces sitting in a theater.

The pacing discussed in this chapter is critical, but its nature is fluid. When scenes are edited in isolation, pacing is determined by the internal rhythms of the scene, but when experienced in the context of the entire story, the scene's unique heartbeat is affected by the other scenes around it. The sense of micro-pacing is affected by the story's macro-pacing and must be honed to serve the film as a whole.

Chapter 4
Structure

> "The editor is the first person that **experiences** the story with a continuity of time."

I'm fascinated with the changes that occur after the script has been written and as it passes through post. What occurs to me is that the editor is the first person that gets to see the story and experience the story with a continuity of time. The writer doesn't deal with the experience of the story in time at all. The director deals with time, but he or she is shooting out of continuity and without true context. The person that deals with the story the way the audience will experience it—over time, continuously from beginning to end—is the editor, along with the director, eventually. This experience of the story in time means that the decisions made by the writer to tell the story may not work as well as the development team thought when they approved a shooting script. Almost all films need to be shortened from the original script—either trimming scenes internally or by eliminating entire scenes. We've all seen deleted scenes from movies that seem like great scenes, but there are reasons that those scenes were cut that go beyond the quality of the scene as a unit unto itself. The story has to be served, and the audience needs to be moved through the story in a logical and emotional progression without undesirable lulls or leaps or tangents along the way. Movies are also often re-structured during the edit, sometimes differing radically from the original script. This re-structure of the film is often due to the experience of watching the movie through time, as opposed to being read.

This chapter deals mostly with structure, but also includes two other related points. One is what I like to call macro-pacing. For film students, this isn't really a term everyone uses. It's a term I coined to distinguish between the shot-to-shot pacing within a single scene and the overall pacing of the entire film.

For me, macro-pacing deals with the following questions: What is the pace through the major story beats of the film? What is the audience's overall impression of the rate at which the story is told? Does the storytelling itself have a pleasing rhythm to it—

with information parceled out at a rate that neither gets too far ahead of the audience or lets the audience get too far ahead of the story?

> **Up to camera**: During principal photography, staying "up to camera" means that the editor has made at least a first pass at editing the scenes shot on the previous day.

The second issue that is roughly related is the delivery of the film's "first assembly." This is a term that many editors hate because it sounds very mechanical and automatic and without thought. I disagree. In feature films and TV, virtually everything is shot out of story order, so the editing that is done during principal photography is to cut individual scenes to stay "**up to camera**." During principal photography, the editor only has a chance to spend a couple hours cutting a scene. With the exception of blockbusters, you may be getting two, three or four scenes a day from production. Four pages of script a day is pretty standard. At the end of production, the editor may get some additional time to tweak scenes before cutting them into the first assembly and then starting on the hard work of finessing each scene, structuring the film and cutting it "to time."

When I talk about cutting a feature film "to time," I don't mean hitting a specific number of minutes—though in TV, that's certainly what it means. In film, I use this term to talk about getting the movie to a length and pace that feels right for the story and the audience. If it's 3 hours and 30 minutes, but that's the most compact the story can be, then it is "to time." If you've got a 90-minute first assembly and it feels long, then you have not cut it "to time." Granted, for me to use the term "to time" to mean "the correct story length" is not lingo that I'll necessarily get agreement on. For me it's just shorthand that's easier to say than, "The movie is cut to the ideal story length with the pacing and story beats all performing satisfactorily for the audience, creating a successful movie-going experience."

Before we can get to that ideal point, we first need to assemble all of the scenes together and start watching them strung together as a story. You will hear conflicting advice about whether to even watch this first assembly all the way through or not. Eventually, though, the overall flow of the movie will affect internal pacing within scenes, and certain structural challenges or mistakes will reveal themselves in a way that didn't in the script. Some scenes may seem redundant when seen in close relationship with each other. Certain emotional tent-pole moments or story beats will feel misplaced—either coming too early or too late in the movie. A common example is that the screenwriter tries to place the story turn from Act 1 to Act 2 at approximately

page 30 in the script (about a quarter of the way through). That should equate to Act 2 starting at 30 minutes in the assembled film, yet sometimes the first cut will have this turn closer to 40 or even 60 minutes in. While there are no hard and fast formulas or rules, 60 minutes is too late to get to Act 2 generally, and some serious cutting will have to be done to eliminate or re-shuffle half of the first 60 minutes. Similarly, many films go on for far too long after the ultimate climax of the movie, and steps will need to be taken to streamline the end of the movie, wrapping it up more succinctly.

The hard truth is that when all the scenes have been edited and finally assembled into a whole story—that's when the rubber meets the road, and the real work begins.

Length of First Assembly

Hullfish: The first step in revealing the structure of the film is during the first assembly. The first assembly of The Martian was three hours, and the final theatrical length came in at 2 hours and 22 minutes (with credits). How do you tell the story economically, and how do you know you've gotten as close to the bone as you can get?

Pietro Scalia, The Martian: The first assembly is really all the scenes in script order, and that really is not a film yet. With the rough assembly, you see obvious things immediately. You see the movement of scenes. You have full scenes with beginnings and endings, and you need to start figuring out where the themes lie in the story and what is important, so you start chipping away, eliminating stuff, trying to make connections, reduce the amount of information. Sometimes visually it's already been said. You don't need more dialogue.

Sometimes you find that you actually need to add time. The day after Watney does his surgery, he gets up and says, "OK, let's do the math. This is how much food I have, and this is what I have to do" and so forth. We noticed immediately that it was too quick for a character to be so "up" immediately and finding a solution. We needed to spend more time with him at the beginning to really try to assess his condition and establish his solitude and loneliness. We created new shots and recycled images from later on in the film and added them after the surgery. We re-purposed shots.

> "I know where I need to be to reach the major turns in the story."

Later on we noticed that there were too many stop and go scenes. We needed to have quicker cause and effect. We needed to consolidate ideas and move it forward. I followed basically a classic Hollywood structure. I know where I need to be to reach the

major turns in the story. We establish very early on that his goal is to get off this planet, but you need to do these smaller steps along the way to get to that. You will see many different techniques of how we condensed and expanded time with the overlap of dialogue to go in circles in time. It's not linear time. So you move through different layers, and you keep the rhythm so it doesn't become monotonous.

Hullfish: Joe, do you recall the original length of your first cut of 12 Years a Slave?

> "The best way to explore this story is through the expressiveness of the central character rather than chronologically."

Joe Walker, 12 Years a Slave: It wasn't very much over … it was 15 or 20 minutes over what we wanted it to be. It was more to do with feeling like you're watching a boxing match, and none of the punches are landing, and fists are just flailing around. But we could see the amazing potential. There's a fundamental tension to the things Steve's depicting. You know that violence is just around the corner. It's a carefully managed balance between giving enough space to invest in the characters and maintaining the story tension. For us, the best way to explore this story was through the expressiveness of the central character rather than the calendar. We can tell how much time has passed, not through little subtitles saying "1852" but through Solomon's marvelous face and the toll all that hard labor has taken on him. Those moments are marked by things like Solomon singing along to a spiritual, or the moment when he breaks his violin.

Hullfish: Maryann, how long was the first pass of Star Wars: The Force Awakens?

Maryann Brandon, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: Two and a half. And JJ really wanted it to be two hours.

Mary Jo Markey, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: Which we never got to.

Maryann Brandon: But we tried. We ended up at something like 2:05 or 2:04.

Hullfish: So 20 or 25 minutes has to come from someplace …

Maryann Brandon: One example is in the castle battle we used to see how Han and Finn and Maz escape from under the castle. It was a very funny scene. Harrison was very funny in it, but we were juggling too many stories. You really wanted to be back with Rey and Ren and move the story forward.

> "If you **can** live without them, you probably **should.**

Mary Jo Markey: A lot of these big set pieces just have too many elements. We took out elements in the opening village raid where the stormtroopers destroy the small village where Lor San Tekka and Poe are at the beginning of the movie. You can't make those sequences into 20-minute long sequences. We did also lift scenes that—even though they were good scenes—we found that we could live without them. And if you can live without them, you probably should. We moved some things earlier in the film. We moved some things later in the film. The ending of the film we tried to streamline as much as possible so the movie didn't feel like it had seven endings.

Hullfish: Kelley, you just cut the Preacher pilot. What was that first cut like?

Kelley Dixon, Preacher: In the pilot, things move fairly fast. There was a lot of character and environmental richness in the script. It was supposed to be a one hour slot, which would make story time somewhere between 43 and 48 minutes roughly. I believe that the pilot is over 60 minutes and the Directors' Cut was over 80 minutes.

Working the First Assembly

Hullfish: Some editors choose to make that first assembly as soon as possible—even stringing together mini-sequences of scenes as soon as several sequential scenes have been shot. Others prefer to hold off on the assembly as long as possible because they feel that it lets them stay more objective longer.

Lee Smith, Spectre: You've got to run the movie as many times as you can fit in your schedule, and we would normally run the movie at least once a week while we were in post, projected. You can just get bogged down in a sequence, and you realize that you're applying too much time to something that's unimportant, and not enough time to something that's very important.

Hullfish: Meaning the overall structure of the film and seeing the scenes within the context of that structure?

Lee Smith: That's what I think. I think the rhythm, the pace, the story points, you've got to make sure you've got all that humming along. Spending three weeks fiddling

with an action sequence is not going to do you any favors when you project the movie at the other end. The faster you get to a working film and then refine it—rather than have a "not working film" and trying to refine that—that's when you're in a world of pain. I find that the hard part of editing that I like to push through is the construction and the mechanics of the scene, and you know when you have it kind of right. I don't worry so much in the initial assembly of the scene because I don't know what's coming before or after since I'm editing as they're shooting.

Hullfish: Dylan, was that the approach on Star Trek Beyond?

Dylan Highsmith, Star Trek Beyond: By the end of the movie, I calculated that we had seen the movie over 112 times with technical checks and things, so it's crucial in the beginning to hold as much perspective as you can. Further down the road, you are relying on new elements to give you a fresh perspective: like visual effects come in, and all of sudden a scene you've seen a 100 times, you see it in a new way. Or the score or the mix. You see everything very different on the soundstage.

Hullfish: Andy, pacing changes with context, right?

> "Trying to keep some objectivity is the key to a process as long as this."

Andy Weisblum, Alice Through the Looking Glass: For sure. There is always the broader context in a movie and trying to keep some objectivity on that level is, I think, the key to a process as long as this. I was really resistant to watching the movie in full too many times, because you start to lose the sense of how it feels. I like to try and focus on the details and information of a specific scene and how to calibrate that for as long as possible in between screenings.

Hullfish: Mary Jo, from what I understand, that's the Bad Robot methodology, right? "Wait to put it in context as long as possible?"

Mary Jo Markey: Really this is a process that's driven by J. J. From his experience working in television, he learned that it felt too overwhelming to watch a full first pass. And when I hear of people watching a first cut that's like 3 hours and 20 minutes long, I can really see his point. Really in a way, "Why?"

Hullfish: Sidney, while they're shooting, are you trying to edit sequences together at all, or are you waiting for all of the scenes to be shot before you start putting scenes together into an act or reel?

Sidney Wolinsky, The Sopranos: Usually, there's enough film coming in that I don't have time to start putting stuff together. So usually I don't put stuff together. If I run out of stuff to do, and I have a whole run of scenes that I can put together, I'll put them together and start working on transitions between scenes, but that's really a function of how much work I have to do. Ultimately you have to put it all together, but usually there's no time during the shooting schedule to do that.

Hullfish: Dan, what about you?

> "If you've got an awkward transition, it can take the audience out of the movie."

Dan Zimmerman, Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials: I try not to wait too long. Because if you wait until you've got a 20-minute sequence or an entire reel, you could be waiting forever. Basically, any time you can attach a scene to another scene—especially if it's a scene that takes place at a different time and or a different place—you want to cut those together so you can help the director with something like "This is what I have as a transition. Were you planning on shooting something? Because if not, this is what the transition looks like, and you may want an establishing shot or some sort of other shot." Transitions I find are so important in movies because it really does tell your audience, "We're progressing and moving on" in a seamless way, and it feels organic to the story you are telling. However if you've got an awkward transition, it can take the audience out of the movie, causing them to disengage with the story, which is not good.

Hullfish: So you get the entire thing laid out in a rough assembly, and you say, "Wow. I've got a 2 hour and 40 minute film and it feels like it." Now what?

Dan Zimmerman: Directors always want to see everything. This is why I always have two timelines. I have my assembly—which does have everything—then there's my editor's cut, which is ultimately what I'm going to first show the director when he first comes into my edit bay to watch the movie for the first time. One director might say, "Hey, when I come in to the edit room, I want to see what you think the movie could be." In that case I will take liberties with the footage like taking scenes out or taking moments out of scenes that I think hamper where the movie needs to end up. Some directors want to see everything. I often tell new directors to be open to all possibilities because, "I can never get your first time viewing back. You get a first time viewing once. And if you want that viewing to be of the pass with everything, then fine, but you're never going to know if you miss something unless you see it with it

out." I always tell them, "I'm not going to do anything to your movie that can't be undone or be put back in." There are really two trim passes. One is the easy trim pass where you look at it and say, "This can go and this can go," and you pull out stuff that you know you can pull out. Then there're the tough decisions. So if you start at 2 hours and 45 minutes and you know you want to be around two hours, I always think that there're 20 minutes that will be easy, and there're 20 minutes that are going to be the hard ones. I also try to never hit a number. I think numbers are ridiculous.

> "You have to go through the steps. It's an evolution of the cut."

Hullfish: Steven, do you agree about the process of attacking that first assembly?

Steven Mirkovich, Risen: I think the pacing of a first cut is always fat. It's a process. In terms of content, I like to show everything that was shot. If the final movie is Z in the alphabet and that's where you lock it, you have to understand you start at A and you go through to B, C, D and so on. You have to go through the steps. There are rarely effective shortcuts. It's an evolution of the cut. I don't know anybody who gets to Z without going through the steps. I think the first cut of Risen was 2 hours and 40 minutes. It might have been longer. The finished movie, at the end of the day, was an hour and 40 minutes. It's hard to imagine, but that's an hour less movie. There was content lifted. There were certain scenes that didn't work, and we could lose them without hurting the film. Those decisions can be agonizing. What works and what doesn't? What can we live without? What can't we live without? The opening battle scene was probably six or seven minutes in the first cut because there was so much material, but it ended up at a minute and a half or two in the final version. When we started our cut down, the first 10 to 20 minutes we lifted came out easily. Once we lifted the obvious scenes we could live without, we tightened down all of the remaining scenes so they played with the right pace. That trimming took care of another 10 to 15 minutes. From there we hunted for more content that could be lifted. The last 10 to 15 minutes to come out was really tough. And that's the grind of editing.

Hullfish: Martin, tell me a bit about trying to tell the story of Eddie the Eagle. What was the difference between the end of the first assembly and where you were able to take it? What was the core of the storytelling that you were able to find?

Martin Walsh, Eddie the Eagle: It is just instinct, really. I just went and looked for the heart and the through-line of what the movie was about and what was the point of the movie. What's it for? Who's it for? Who's the audience? What flavor does it have? There were some areas that needed streamlining, compressing. There was all

sorts of inelegance in the writing as much as anything else really that needed fixing, where it meandered off point. My instincts were to slow the movie down a little bit at the beginning and focus on the kid and what his relationship was with his parents. Once you've established what you're doing and why you're doing it and where you're going with it … I think the first 5 or 10 minutes is where you win an audience or you lose them.

> "Be careful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater."

Hullfish: Anne, you've experienced the situation when you cut a scene by itself, and you feel good about it, but then when you see it in the larger context of the movie, your perception of the pace of that scene changes, right?

Anne Coates, Lawrence of Arabia: Generally your film is too long: 99% of the time. Lawrence of Arabia we kept it long, but most films you go through, and you start taking out the dead wood as we might call it, but particularly the scenes that are repetitive, but you might not have noticed at the time. So you start trimming those down or taking them out, taking lines out here and there, and you're speeding up your rhythms because when you first cut it, it's a little slower. You'd like it to play down as fast as possible, so you do a lot of that when you look at the film overall, and sometimes you put it back again because it was better the other way, but you have to be careful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. You know the film so well, and the director knows the film, so that if you aren't careful—particularly if there's a scene that you don't like very much and isn't playing very well and there's another scene that's similar, you're inclined to cut it out—then you don't know why it isn't playing so well, so you put it back in again. When we did Out of Sight, we did a lot of very tricky cutting. I said to Steven (director, Steven Soderbergh) one day, "I think we may have overdone it. It's so jerky, and I don't think the audience will be able to follow it." We had the character going to three different prisons and all sorts of things that aren't in the finished film, so we went back in and simplified it all, because when we looked at it, we realized that each scene in and of itself was very clever and good and interestingly cut, but all together it became a bit of a mish mash, so we simplified it.

> "With nearly every scene you make changes as a result of watching the whole thing together."

Hullfish: How did the Star Trek Beyond team experience this change in pace when the whole film was finally seen in context?

Steven Sprung, Star Trek Beyond: With nearly every scene you make changes as a result of watching the whole thing together.

Kelly Matsumoto, Star Trek Beyond: When you cut the scenes individually, a lot of times, you cut a beginning, middle and end. Everything's got a button, but then you put the scenes together and the film doesn't flow, so you need to adjust the beginning and ends of scenes, so there'll be better transitions. Just watching the film as a whole, you can feel where things drag or move too fast. There are scenes that we moved earlier or later that really affected the way the movie felt and flowed.

Dylan Highsmith: That was something we were fighting the whole way through just because, by design, the film is very episodic in the second act. You're splitting up all the characters into different pairs. So, you have a lot of these different kinds of isolated beats, and they're all very modular. Pacing-wise, if you trim one too short, that ripples across the balance of every scene. It's something we were constantly chasing with transitions and with tracking the balance of the amount of time with each character.

Hullfish: Could you talk about where structure changed and why?

Dylan Highsmith: We had two separate issues that we were wrestling with for a very long time. There's a big action set piece in the middle of the second act where the saucer flips that was always missing a breather before we kick things off again. That was one. Then there's a really nice emotional scene between Bones and Spock in the "muffin." (The "muffin" was the production nickname for the cave that Bones and Spock discover when they first crash land on the planet.) It's a lovely scene that Steven cut, but it always felt like it was happening too early. Towards the latter part of post, we realized that by moving it right after the Saucer Flip, it was the perfect balance of a nice character downbeat to give a breather and it felt like it was the right amount of time where you really felt like this character moment was earned.

Steven Sprung: Yeah it was too early in the film, and it followed a little too closely the scene where the two of them enter that location. It was rushed. And it stopped the action.

Kelly Matsumoto: Instead of enjoying and wanting to hear what they said, you're kind of thinking, "Let's get to the next scene."

Steven Sprung: That was a small ripple that made a huge difference.

> "Your long cut is the block and then you start chiseling away to find the heart of it."

Clayton Condit, Voice from the Stone: You're sculpting at this stage. Your long cut is the block and you need to create the block first so you can start chiseling away to find the heart of it. Find the double beats and repeated moments to start carefully trimming. And if you have a whole lot of great moments, well, you know what? Some of those great moments are going to have to go away, because you don't need three similar great moments. Remind yourself of the storyline and scene objective and keep refining.

Hullfish Conrad, do you have any examples of that?

Conrad Buff, The Huntsman: Winter's War: I think every film has that problem for the most part. You find out that the scene is a just a little indulgent—a little fat in context to where it's living within the film. By the time you get to that scene, perhaps the pace needs to be affected, so compression in some form needs to take place. Or perhaps: "Do we need the scene?" Or is there another way or another area that it can live in? Or can it be compressed in an interesting way? In The Huntsman, the first act, there was quite a bit of development with these two young kids who ultimately become The Huntsman (Chris Hemsworth) and Sara (Jessica Chastain), but a lot of it went on too long. So we had to find interesting ways to compress it. It seems to be a normal process but, initially, I'm going to try and include everything. I don't want to throw anything out until we can kind of see it more in context. I may have instincts that I want to get rid of this or compress something—but for the director's benefit, and to get them up to speed, and in sync, and see what his or her reaction would be, I want to preserve everything that they shot, as closely as possible, and then, collectively—together—we can prune it accordingly. Everything I read these days is too long (laugh). And frequently, Act 1 is too long, and you wish and hope that before they start shooting, a writer is able to compress it on the page as opposed to us having to do it editorially. But so often, it's us.

> "I may want to get rid of something—but for the director's benefit, I want to preserve everything."

Hullfish: Can you remember any of the scenes that were deleted from Huntsman and why that choice was made? Or why was a scene restored?

Conrad Buff: There's a scene at the beginning of The Huntsman, where the Charlize Theron character poisons a king. It was shot at night, interior, fire lit, castle scene, followed by another interior, night, fire lit, castle scene between Emily Blunt and Charlize. There was something a little claustrophobic about the beginning. So we thought "Maybe we don't need the Charlize scene. We've seen her murder kings in the past." We tried taking it out. But [the] director was missing it and argued for restoration because we need to know right away that she's the villain.

Hullfish: She's capable of anything.

Conrad Buff: Yeah. And probably he didn't want to have to tell her that the scene was cut out of the movie either (laughs)!

> "The things that create the most feeling for each of these characters: you want to keep all of that stuff."

Hullfish: What were some of the discussions about things that got dropped or rearranged in Ghostbusters?

Brent White, Ghostbusters: You look at the relationships between the four girls and what are the things that are the most important for those four relationships and that becomes one of the things that you look at. The things that create the most feeling for each of these characters, and you want to keep all of that stuff, and the stuff that is extra, you can jettison.

Hullfish: Job, you are in agreement about the context changing the sensation of pacing on a smaller scale, right? Then things have to be readjusted.

Job Ter Burg, Elle: That's actually the longest part of the process, going back and forth between macro and micro. What I used to do in the past, what I still see some people do, is they will have gone through each scene, then assemble the scenes in script order. Everything is there, and every scene has been worked on, and they go to the beginning of the sequence, and they press play, and they watch the whole thing. I stopped doing that quite some time ago because I found it only depressed me and the director.

Hullfish: (Laughing) You're not the only one!

Job Ter Burg: After 12 minutes, you've seen tons of things that don't work, or things you want to change or try, and you still have to watch another 2 hours of scenes that

are in a similar shape. So, to me at least, it makes much more sense to approach the film in sequences. Then you get into the process of working with the director, trying to find the best and the weakest parts of the film: where does it play and where does it not yet play well, where it's either unclear or too clear, not dense enough or too dense. At some point we had a cut of the film, and we felt it was something like 15 minutes too long. It wasn't a matter of a scene or sequence, but just that the entire film felt too long. So we made the film shorter. A few days later, we were preparing for a screening, and Paul said, "What have we taken out over the last few days? Let's put all of it back in for the screening and watch them one more time." At first I felt we were taking steps backwards, but he argued that we already knew we could take them out, and how to take them out. He wanted to give those scenes one more chance to make it into the movie. And he was right, we ended up putting some of those scenes back and taking out others. It was mostly a matter of deciding how much time we would dedicate to this particular character or that relationship between characters.

Hullfish: John, when you're working through that first assembly, have you realized that the temperature that you gave to certain performances or certain takes or whatever is wrong because of what you see when you see the movie as a whole?. You think, "Oh, this guy can't be in this emotional state here because it needs to happen three scenes down."

John Refoua, Magnificent Seven: Yes, that happens all the time. You get a scene, and you cut it the best you can. You embellish. You make a meal out of it. It's a feast. You say, "That's a beautiful scene. I love it, it is delicious." Then you get another scene the next day, you do the same thing, and at a certain point you put them all together you say, "Wow, that is a lot of delicious stuff, but I can't eat all of that." You need to pick something. You can't have a 14 course meal, even though each course is beautifully done. You gotta cut it down. In the same way, the beats that you spent on somebody thinking about something … well you don't need those anymore. These lines of dialogue you don't need or these pieces of action you don't need. That is a normal process that happens with every movie.

Hullfish: What about structure? What were some of the things that happened when you cut together your editor's version of the thing? What decisions changed the structure?

John Refoua: I can use the Magnificent Seven as an example for that, but it happens in every movie. You shoot more scenes than you need. It's better to have more scenes when you go into the cutting room than not enough. Then you have to go back and shoot something. So with Magnificent Seven, somebody needs help. They get to the town, and while they are waiting for the bad guys to come back, they shot a number

of different scenes of various things happening in the town before the big bad guy comes back with his army. We had a hard time figuring out how many of those scenes we needed and how much interaction between the Seven and the townspeople we needed, and you don't know that until you put the whole movie together.

Hitting Beats

Hullfish: In many films, there's a discussion of getting to a certain spot in the movie as early as possible. Not necessarily hitting a certain minute mark—like 10 minutes or 30 minutes—but knowing that there's a critical moment that you really need to get the audience to as soon as is feasible. With War Room, we jockeyed some scenes out of script order so that we could get to the introduction of the Miss Clara character as early as possible. That's where we felt the audience would dial in emotionally. What story point in Spotlight did you feel was that critical moment, Tom?

Tom McArdle, Spotlight: With this movie, it was when the survivors started coming in. We found that once Phil Saviano came into the office with his box of evidence and leads, that people were telling us that this moment was when they started to feel more invested in the story and more connected. So we did what we could to tighten and trim everything before that point.

Hullfish: Mike, on In the Heart of the Sea, was that moment the sinking of the Essex?

> "Sometimes you end up chipping away too much and then shorter feels longer."

Mike Hill, In the Heart of the Sea: Yeah, for us it was the big whale attack where he sinks the Essex. When you've got your first assembly, that moment happens a lot later because the entire movie is so much longer in every way than it's ever going to be, but I think for us, in the course of trimming and honing down, that moment comes closer to where you want it.

Dan Hanley, In the Heart of the Sea: For us, it was a little bit about getting them off the island from our original cut—shortening it. There was a lot of interesting stuff—survival stuff—on the island, but it was like, "We get it. They're stranded." So in that area we had to judiciously chip away at it until we ended up with something we liked. Sometimes you end up chipping away too much, and then shorter feels longer, you know what I mean, because you didn't get enough character or you didn't get enough information, so it feels like a gloss-over. Then the scene becomes vulnerable because

it feels like nothing. So that process of making the scene as compelling as you can, and in the same process shortening it as much as you can, is interesting to me.

Hullfish: Julian, what are the decisions that were made to determine that Deadpool was too long or that we need to get to a specific moment sooner?

Julian Clarke, Deadpool: Mercifully, our first cut of this movie was about 2 hours long, and our finished version was about an hour and 45. First you cut some shoe-leather. Then you cut some things that don't work. Then you cut a couple of things that are redundant. You cut a couple of things you like, but in the name of the greater good, they have to go … In the situation where you're cutting 45 minutes out of a movie or an hour, then you've taken out an entire storyline. You have these huge gaps, and the writing of the original script assumes that that storyline is there, and you have to find a way to glue that back together without it. That can be tough. Fortunately, with this project, we were not in that situation. But in terms of how the macro pacing goes, we did find that we have this middle section of the movie where Wade is in the workshop where he becomes Deadpool, and it's very dark and almost a harrowing part of the movie and where the revenge story emanates from, but when it was too long, we found that the audience sort of took a long time to recover from that, so we'd get to a funny scene shortly after the workshop and no one was laughing. So we knew that was a problem, so two things were the solution: partly we took a few minutes out of the workshop to reduce the trauma of it a little, and we added an additional scene between the workshop and the funny scene, which eased you out of the dramatic tone and back into the comedy.

Hullfish: Jan, let's talk about structure for Whiskey Tango Foxtrot. How was the movie different from the script?

Jan Kovac, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: There were a bunch of scenes that were great, but they were stubborn. They didn't want to cooperate with us, and at some point you just leave in the movie what the movie wants. You start with the "kitchen sink cut," which was 3 hours, and we got it down to an hour and 52 minutes with credits. You're taking the time out as you go, but the time being cut out is not the goal; it's a side-effect. Structurally, the biggest issue was getting Kim (Tina Fey's character) into the thick of the action in Afghanistan as fast as we could. I think getting to that portion of the movie without breaking everything else was a bit of a puzzle.

Hullfish: What about with Mad Max, Margaret?

> "I was mindful to keep the story moving and not be seduced by visually interesting footage."

Margaret Sixel, Mad Max: Fury Road: Most of the effort was put into cutting the action sequences down, dropping shots, increasing speed ramps and shaving off frames. It was a delicate balancing act, neither to short change sequences nor exhaust an audience. We gave each moment its best shot, and only once we had a very refined cut did we feel justified in dropping material. There was pressure to cut the film down to 100 minutes, but George and I didn't want to cut too deeply and brutally where logic and the musicality of sequences were sacrificed. But it was a good exercise, as it did get me to question every moment.

Over time the cut grew tighter and more muscular. I wanted to get to the moment in the storm when Max decides to break free as soon as I could. We couldn't keep our main character bound and gagged for too long. So I was always mindful of keeping the story moving along and not being seduced by visually interesting footage.

Hullfish: David, your film, Batman v Superman has these big action sequences, but it was characters that needed to be cut in the long run.

> "It's easy to put things back, so make a bold pass."

David Brenner, Batman v Superman: In the script there were more storylines than you see in the movie today. That was probably our biggest editorial issue in trying to get the cut down to a reasonable length. For us, the trickiest section was the beginning of the film, until the point where Bruce Wayne tells Alfred the truth about what is on the "White Portuguese" ship. This moment sets into motion everything until the end of the film really. Until that point the movie was always tracking many solo paths. Finally in this scene, the paths fork into one road. Also in terms of building this beginning, we had to move things around. In the script, Lex was introduced much later, but we found that it was best to set him up sooner. Plus, his presence has so much energy. Generally, BvS was a unique challenge in that we had not one but two protagonists, each with an alter-ego. So there was Clark Kent, Superman, Bruce Wayne and Batman. And then surrounding them are Lois Lane, Lex Luthor, Wallace Keefe (the guy who loses his legs when Wayne Tower falls), Perry White, Martha Kent, Holly Hunter's character (Senator Finch), and still more characters orbiting them. It was a lot to juggle. So the plot lines of a couple characters had to go. These people are still

in the movie, but we don't track them. So what was once a nearly four-hour cut with absolutely everything was ridiculous—ended up being about a three-hour cut, once all these added storylines were refined with the fat cut out. I think the right length depends on the story. And at the same time, it's very important to get the movie as tight as it can be. I like to keep cutting until I get to a version where the director and I feel it's too tight: where you feel "That was too fast, that was too short, this is hard to follow, this isn't landing." It's good to get to this point because you know you've crossed the limit. Now you isolate these over-tight moments and put some air back into them. It's easy to put things back, so make a bold pass.

Hullfish: Tom, where do you go from the first assembly?

> "I find that the assembly can be very traumatic for many directors."

Tom Cross, Whiplash: With the first assembly, I never see it as something precious that needs to be hung on a gallery wall. I find that the assembly can be very traumatic for many directors. They really don't like watching them. As an editor, it's important to not take that personally because it's not about my work necessarily (although it can be). It's more about the director seeing this far-from-perfect version of their story, and it's hitting them like a ton of bricks. There are so many things wrong, and they don't really know where to begin. Many of them are choices that I made that the director would like to change, and some of them are things that didn't translate well from the script. It's my job to be realistic about the problems, but it's also my responsibility to be supportive, assuage fears and start steering the process in a constructive direction. At that point, I remind the director that the best way to tackle the entire film is one scene at a time.

Structure

Hullfish: The structure of the story is very important. Very often it's a structure that is set up in the script and remains largely unchanged. In some instances, the structure of the story can change radically. Gone Girl has one of the most interesting structures in a film that I can remember. It's very unique in how it deals with time. How much of that structure was present in the original script, and how much was determined in the editing room, Kirk?

Kirk Baxter, Gone Girl: Most of it was "as written." I'm sure David worked with Gillian (screenwriter, Gillian Flynn) in the streamlining of it, but when you follow it strictly, you end up with a longer movie. So I find my role with Fincher to be not so

much the re-writing of the order of things, but the streamlining of things. So there was a lot of written back and forth between the present and diary in the middle of the film—the first act—and as the momentum started to build up, I reduced the back and forth and put a lot of the flashback material together into one thing so that you could stay with the whole procedural part of the film, and I think that reduced time and kept the flow going.

> "A visual tells a thousand words, and sometimes that gets a little lost on the page."

Hullfish: Dan, have you worked on films that had a lot of restructuring done in the edit suite?

Dan Zimmerman: Absolutely. There have been movies I've worked with where I read the script and thought what a great movie it will be, then, when you put it together in the way of the script on film, you say, "I see the ending coming from a mile away. We have to fix that." A visual tells a thousand words, and sometimes that gets a little lost on the page. So let's take the climactic part of the third act and put it in the beginning of the movie and basically tell it as if it were a flashback. You're hinting to the audience and getting them engrossed in "This is gonna happen," and now I'm going to lead you back to how it happened. Maybe it was written linearly and you're completely flipping it on its head because the audience disengages because they know the outcome before it happens.

Hullfish: Joe, 12 Years a Slave had a structure that didn't conform to chronology.

Joe Walker: The things that excite me about working with Steve's material (director, Steve McQueen)—and 12 Years is really a good example of it—is that I love working with performance and music and image and sound and all that, but you also get to work with time. That's a super-power unique to editing. So there are flashbacks and some sequences or shots in 12 Years that are held for a very long time, which allow the audience to kind of invest and really study an image, but you have to balance that with a commercial sense and landscape things so that it doesn't feel like artistic indulgence but serves the story.

> "You also get to work with time. That's a super-power unique to editing."

Hullfish: Give an example of what you mean by working with time. And what do you mean by "landscaping"?

Joe Walker: To give you the overview, the original book and the screenplay were chronological. The driving force was the calendar. Steve and I began to explore changing the structure. We realized that chronologically might not be the best way to drive the story, and maybe the better way is through following the expressive inner world of Solomon. That led us down a path of flashbacks. There were a few imperatives that we felt we had to obey. One was that we needed to immerse ourselves in the slave experience at the beginning and that we need him in chains by the end of reel 1. And in serving that, it loosened up the timeline so that we could tell some elements of the story in the rear-view mirror. A good example is Eliza, who has her children torn away from her. Originally, in the chronological story, she told her backstory upon meeting Solomon. They were in a cell together in the slave pen in Washington, and she explained how she had been the master's favorite and borne him a child, but it felt like that story was holding up Solomon's first experiences of captivity, so we held it back until after the moment where we see her for the last time, being dragged off. Then we played the scene of Solomon remembering this tale that she'd told him, and it felt so much more poignant: to go from a woman in incredible distress to the same woman with a broad smile on her face, explaining the fine clothes she used to wear. It's little experiments like that. The film originally started with Solomon stringing then playing the violin, going shopping with his wife, his wife leaving and meeting two people in Saratoga, traveling to Washington and then waking up in chains. That's how the story used to start.

The thing I mean about landscaping, is if you take the scene where you have Solomon left hanging because he's caught between two masters: one person can't hang him, and the other person can't cut him down. That was Steve's idea of what he wanted as the centerpiece of the sequence. But, if everything is slow up to that point, or after it, it would just feel like artistic indulgence. So what I mean by landscaping is we compress time enormously before it. You see Solomon waiting for the horsemen to arrive, but you don't see them fully arrive, you don't see them bind his hands and feet—all this was shot, but not used. When he's strung up, it's all happening way too quickly. It's all racing, and we're sort of ahead of the audience. Then the music stops and we stand back, we're on a wide shot, and we let it breathe. Then after the event we're also compressing time, so that when the Benedict Cumberbatch character—Master Ford—arrives and cuts him down, he hacks into the rope, and we don't even see Solomon falling to the ground, it just cuts straight into another shot where he's lying on the floor of an opulent hallway. You kind of manipulate time so you're a little ahead of the audience, and then you can stop, slow down and use as a soundtrack the

rise and fall of the cicadas. We hold that shot for an agonizing time so that hopefully it provokes a response from the audience … that they are witnessing something real, disturbing.

> "Your film is never as great as your dailies and never as terrible as your first assembly."

Part of the necessary process of film-making, it seems to me, is that you love everything into existence during the shoot while you're gathering the elements of the film. But in the first assembly of the film, every actor's poignant pause has been lovingly preserved, and you realize that it's now dying on its feet. Then you have to twist your logic around to a much more punitive attitude of giving every moment a very tough look. All those pauses? You now have to sell some to buy others. Gradually, you get to a place where you don't want to change anything anymore, and it's become solid in some way. I think Scorsese (director, Martin Scorsese) got it right when he said, "Your film is never as great as your dailies and never as terrible as your first assembly." It feels like you need that process.

Hullfish: In another of your movies, I feel like there was some restructuring too. Tell me about the opening text prologue that explains the name of the film: Sicario. Why do we need to explain the name of the movie to the audience? Why not just call it "The Drug Cartel Movie" and kill all that text on screen? The text explains that the word "Sicario" was a Roman word for a zealot from Jerusalem, and in Spanish, or in Mexico at least, it means "hit man."

Joe Walker: That's something we added. Actually the lines of text at the beginning were something that Alejandro's character said in a scene we dropped. So that text is sort of a trace element of the scene that we removed. It was a brilliant scene with Benicio Del Toro's character, Alejandro, looking out to sea, standing waist deep in water, then you slowly realize he's holding someone's head under the water. He yanks the guy's head out of the water, shouts questions at him and because the guy doesn't answer adequately, Alejandro shoves his head underwater again. Unfortunately, he overdoes it and drowns him. He drags the dead body back to shore, gives him CPR. The guy coughs and sputters and comes back to life, only for Alejandro to resume the interrogation. It was such a great scene and a brilliant opening, but, in the grand scheme of things, it took away from Kate's point of view. It was too dangerous to include it because there was another more important story tangent that we had to keep in equilibrium alongside Kate's story, and that's the story of the Mexican cop—because when we cut to the cop, you don't know who he is or how he relates to the sto-

ry. That was one of the things that changed quite a bit—the position of those scenes. Sometimes that was an issue of pacing as well because they were slower and more subtle and weren't so driven by dialogue. It was just dropping hints, step by step … "OK, this guy's an alcoholic. OK, he's a cop." You're carefully pacing the reveal of a character. Anyway, we couldn't have another tangent with Alejandro at the beginning, we had to start with a strong Kate scene in the SWAT assault tank. You're following her story. Everything is seen from her vantage point, and the Mexican cop story was in counterpoint to that.

Hullfish: Speaking of openings that are different than the script, the open of The Martian was originally intended to be used as a flashback, right? But that got moved from much later in the movie to the beginning.

Cheryl Potter, The Martian: We tried that "flashback" scene in so many different places, and wherever we put it, it just stopped the story from being told, because we were showing something that had already been referred to, so the audience already knew about it. One good thing about the way it used to be is that the movie starts with him just waking up, and you have no context. It's just this guy waking up on another planet alone, and you haven't had a setup. You're just there with him going, "Holy Crap!" But once we did move it, it was like, "Ahhh … (sigh of relief)."

Hullfish: Eddie, the script for Mission Impossible—Rogue Nation was pretty complex. Was there any structural tweaking in there?

Eddie Hamilton, Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation: That is what we do constantly, from the moment we watch the first assembly of any movie I've edited, we are constantly thinking of ways to improve the flow of the story and the way the audience engages in the story. We had a few casualties on Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation where we felt there were similar story beats in scenes, so we lost one of the scenes. There was a whole eight-minute section in the middle of the film that we completely removed, and during our two days of pick-ups, we shot a new scene which allowed us to remove that chunk exactly where it needed to come out, because we were getting notes from the audience that the film slowed in the middle, so we removed those eight minutes and the notes went away. Also, we removed some scenes with the villain, and it helped make him more mysterious and slightly more threatening, and people had less confusion with his motivation because he was more elusive, which helped us. A lot of editors have a system of 4x6 scene cards on the wall, a series of cards running down on a white board with magnetic tape, so we can swap the cards around and see the flow of the entire film right in front of us.

Hullfish: Scriptwriters often do something similar. We used the same scene notecards that they used when they wrote the script when we re-arranged the story flow and timing with War Room. Ours were on Post-It notes—which I would not recommend—the edit suite ended up littered with Post-It notes that were not quite sticky enough.

> "Quite often it takes longer to discuss it than it does just to try it out."

Eddie Hamilton: On a film like Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation, it is a big kind of detective story, so the characters will start here and they will get a clue and they will go there and do something, which takes them to another clue, so there's a very linear path for the story to follow just because of the genre. This means there isn't much opportunity to drastically restructure the film, but in other movies, I have done a lot of work where we've restructured a lot of things or got to the inciting incident quicker. And I firmly believe we should leave no stone unturned. If anyone has an idea, we absolutely must try it, because until you see it, you cannot know if it may have a spark of genius in there that can turn out to be something great. Quite a lot of time I hear stories of people debating or deconstructing the merits of a particular idea, and quite often it takes longer to discuss it than it does just to try it out.

Hullfish: The interesting thing to me is that you told me that you were able to cut out an eight-minute sequence in the middle of the story. Because of the linearity, how did you manage to cut such a large section of the movie?

Eddie Hamilton: We had shot a scene in a Moroccan bar, and it led the characters down a certain path, and we came back later and shot the scene again so that they went straight to London, and the story carried on from London instead of them taking a detour round another eight minutes of story. We didn't miss it at all. It was just a very elegant solution and something which we as editors and filmmakers do constantly when we are advising productions on additional pick-ups. It's how to simplify story and make it work for the audience better by shooting one extra scene, which can remove six scenes. That happens quite regularly. Peter Jackson on all the Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit movies did a month, two months, three months of pick-ups for each film to improve the story based on discoveries in the editing room. That's very, very common, and producers have usually set aside a small slice of the budget to allow for that.

Hullfish: Stephen, is there an example in The Revenant of structural changes?

Stephen Mirrione, The Revenant: Yes. There's a section of the movie that took so long to find the right structure for. Fitzgerald's story about the squirrel originally came much later. By moving it earlier, it helps inform all the scenes that come after. It seems so obvious now, but it wasn't written that way, and it certainly worked in its original position. There was just this nagging feeling that it wasn't in the right position. That was one of the last changes we made, and it is a completely different experience because of that change.

Hullfish: The scriptwriter writes the script, and the development team really feels like every scene was necessary, or they would have changed them in the development process and saved the time and money by not shooting the scenes in the first place, yet it's not until the editor gets to see them play out over time that you understand the implications of each scene and each line.

Stephen Mirrione: That's where this trust thing comes in. When we first start working I know I'm already a few steps ahead of the director in terms of being ready to throw some things out—knowing that something is redundant—he's not going to be ready to do that yet, and I just have to be patient and wait and maybe we'll get to a point where I'll realize that maybe they do have to stay. But I trust him, and I know that he's not an indulgent guy.

Hullfish: The scenes aren't precious to him. That's a great lesson that I need to be more cognizant of. I always want the director to immediately see why something can be cut … I just need some patience and have less ego.

Stephen Mirrione: It's very risky to take a script, which by nature has to be overwritten, and cut it down so much that you lose whatever magic could have been in there.

Hullfish: When Harrison Ford broke his ankle during filming of Star Wars: The Force Awakens, it allowed some time to really re-structure and re-write a lot of scenes.

Maryann Brandon: A big thing was moving the introduction of the old characters later in the film. I think that worked tremendously.

Mary Jo Markey: At one point, in the first reel (approximately the first 20 minutes) we saw Leia, we saw C3PO, we saw R2D2. It was so much more fun to kind of sprinkle that throughout the film.

Hullfish: Lee, any examples of restructuring in your movies, Spectre specifically?

> "It's no time for little ideas. You've got to start thinking big and try big."

Lee Smith: Once you see that first assembly, you quickly see where it drags. The other thing you might realize is that where something seemed very clear in the script, on film it's no longer clear; the scene has moved too far away from the initial event. It's cause and effect. You've set something up, but you've waited 20 minutes to show the consequence. You feel that. Then you've got the process of figuring out if maybe there's a scene that's a "floater." Can we drag that scene out and put it somewhere else so we can get the cause closer to the effect? Some films I've re-engineered massively, like the whole third act becomes the second act. Or the whole last part of the third act becomes the beginning. Films that you look at that are confusing and don't work, you have to employ some fairly large thinking. It's no time for little ideas. You've got to start thinking big and try big. Try something that was never in the script.

Hullfish: Glenn, you contemplated several structural changes to the story in Whiskey Tango Foxtrot. The movie starts in Afghanistan for basically a single scene, then jumps to NYC for only a few scenes before the story jumps back to Afghanistan. What were the discussions about keeping the NYC scenes?

Glenn Ficarra, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: There was a big argument to remove it all and just start the movie on the plane to Afghanistan and just back-fill the story.

Hullfish: Was the structure of the movie as it stands now the structure of the script: beginning in Afghanistan for a scene then jumping back to New York and restarting from the beginning?

Glenn Ficarra: Yeah. That was in the script, which I think was a smart decision because it gives you something intriguing up front and then you're waiting till we get there. It gives you a shape of the movie before you watch the movie.

Hullfish: Can you think of any big structural changes?

> "We found by sticking with her character, we really found the path."

Glenn Ficarra: I think it was a lot of re-ordering. It was a delicate balance because by nature it was a very plot-less script. It's really a slice-of-life character study. The scripted version as edited in the assembly was three hours long, and we immediately

said, “Let’s strip it down to the bare essentials.” So we stripped it way down, and that didn’t play right. It didn’t feel like it had enough aimlessness in it, so we kind of folded some of that back in, some of the flavor. So from a plot perspective—of which there is very little—nothing changed. From a textural point of view, a lot is gone. Great scenes fell out that didn’t have room in the movie. When we started to get too far away from the basic story of her and more about Afghanistan as a whole or reporters as a whole, it started to lose its drive, so we found by sticking with her character, we really found the path.

Hullfish: Margaret, on Mad Max, what story changes were made in editing?

Margaret Sixel: Audiences new to the Mad Max films wanted to know what had happened to him and why was he crazy? How come he didn’t speak? For a while there was pressure to do a synopsis of the first three Mad Max films and pop it on the front of the film, but I resisted that. So we created the opening title/soundscape sequence about the fallen world and added the opening Max voice-over. We also added the “little girl” element to flesh out Max’s backstory. We experimented with flash or subliminal cuts to hint at past trauma.

Interestingly a relatively simple scene where they all decide to turn back needed to be adjusted. The first cuts of this scene gave more weight to Capable (Riley Keogh) and Nux (Nicholas Hoult) and not enough to Max. With some careful rewriting and editing, I managed to shift the focus back onto Max. This was done without reshoots, only audio rerecords. People felt that we were setting them up for a big battle once they were back at the Citadel and were disappointed when it didn’t take place, so with some subtle dialogue reworking, we dampened expectations.

Hullfish: Captain America: Civil War was a big film. I have to believe that there was some restructuring in there somewhere.

> “Making it work was a lot about tone control.”

Jeffrey Ford: In post, we made very few adjustments to the overall structure of the movie because as you can tell when you see it, it’s hard to re-organize a lot of the material. We re-ordered a little bit of the recruitment section which was, I believe in the script the recruitment of Peter Parker was later. We moved that up a little bit, and I believe we moved Hawkeye’s re-emergence down a bit. All that shuffling we do is just to keep the rhythm of it flowing and keeping the pacing working because we ended up with a much longer sequence of Tony and Peter Parker than we originally

thought, and we wanted to keep it all because it was great material. You shoot things and then everything changes slightly. I believe we also consolidated a scene where Bucky tells the story of the other Winter Soldiers who are at the facility, and we see a bit of a flashback to Karpov and the super soldiers and Bucky sort of doing a cage fighting match. That sequence used to be split into two parts, and we left Cap, Falcon and Bucky and went to Tony, Widow and General Ross in the Taskforce Center, and then we came back to Bucky and Cap and Falcon and finished off that story, but some of that got restructured so we could streamline it a bit. The movie was extremely dependent on modulating tone so that we could start out in a way that was exciting, then we get a little bit heavy and then things get rather dark and tense, then we have this lighter bit in the middle, then we shift back into a darker tone. Making it work was a lot about tone control. And the last and most important thing editorially was being vigilant about point of view, because that's what takes you from story to story, and it has to be seamless, and it has to be a perfect hand-off each time or else you start to feel it piling up and becoming episodic. So the planned transitions that Joe and Anthony did, plus the ones that Matt and I created later in order to achieve a sort of seamless point of view hand-offs from character to character—those are golden. Those were something that we fought to create, and those were the hardest things to build in the movie, and they're the most satisfying things to watch when I see the movie now.

The rhythm of getting from one character to another, especially in the big battle scene in the middle, you have to move from character to character and not feel like anything is piling up. But even simple things like moving from the conflict between the Avengers regarding the Sokovia Accords to Cap attending Peggy (Agent Carter)'s funeral, just the way that that transition needed to work—going from an ensemble scene focusing on Cap showing his emotional transition, then we're in London and he's at a funeral, then his talk with Black Widow, which hands us off to T'Challa at the UN. So much happens in that section and so much is emotional character and point of view stuff that's related to Cap, but then you meet this whole new character. Sometimes it all feels like it flows naturally, and I think that balance was very tricky to achieve, because if it moves in fits and starts, it doesn't work as well. I look at it now, and it looks like it was always meant to be that way, but some of it was very carefully adjusted. One of my favorite transitions is after Cap has tackled T'Challa, who's trying to catch Bucky in the tunnel, T'Challa takes off his mask, and they all stand there kind of frozen, and it's like, "Things have just changed." We've just finished this big action set-piece, and then we cut to Vision, who's desperately trying to work his way through a recipe for paprikash for Wanda Maximoff while listening to Chet Baker. I mean it's insane the difference between the moment of high conflict and an introduc-

tion of a superhero to an android cooking, but the lift you get from that juxtaposition is thrilling and fun.

Hullfish: John, any restructuring you can remember in Magnificent Seven?

John Refoua: Magnificent Seven is sort of a linear story. One thing that we played around with: When they get to town they take over the town and they kick the henchman out. Now they know the bad guys are coming back. That area of the movie we restructured quite a bit. They walk through the town. They talk about how they are going to defend it. Then they do some preparation for it. They do a lot of different things. They talk to a lot of different people. That area of the movie we spent weeks basically shortening some scenes, lengthening some scenes, taking scenes out, moving scenes around. At one point there were two montages there. We reduced it to one montage. To begin that whole sequence, when they walk through the town, that was supposed to be the next morning. The first thing we do is have them ask, "How do we defend this place?" And we moved that to almost the end of that sequence, a day or so before the bad guys show up.

Hullfish: Do you remember why you made that decision to move that from the beginning to the end?

John Refoua: Yes. It's a whole little montage sequence where they go inside the saloon. They are talking about what the plan would be. At the same time, they are walking through the town talking about what they could do and how they could defend this town. It used to come much earlier, but afterwards there was a lot of preparation, and there were a number of scenes that happened. And so it actually made it seem better to move that closer to when the actual action happened when the bad guy shows up, so that the audience remembers what the strategy was and what they were doing. It also made it seem a little harder to actually figure out how to defend the town if they spend more time in the town before they figure it out.

Intercutting

Hullfish: A complex structural device in films that rarely seems to remain "as scripted" is intercut scenes. An example that stands out to me among the editors I've talked to is In the Heart of the Sea in which the Herman Melville character hears the story of the Essex and is then intercut with the scenes from the Essex voyage. Often times, intercutting is only used for a small portion of a movie, but in this movie, it is intercut throughout the length of the film.

Dan Hanley: I know there was a little bit of a reconstruct in the order of the Melville scenes and where they fell so that the pacing is sprinkled out throughout the movie, so you didn't have long, long gaps without him.

Mike Hill: Usually they needed to stay in the spot they were scripted. Sometimes we would eliminate them (the Melville/Nickerson scenes) or shorten them way down, and sometimes we would come back for a single line of dialogue, or we would not go back to it visually, but we would use the dialogue as voice over narration instead of on-camera.

Hullfish: David, because there are so many storylines in Batman v Superman, you also had a lot of intercutting. How much consolidation of those storylines do you do, so they're not so cutty? You need to stay with them long enough to get invested in that part of the story, right?

> "When it's time to cut, try to find cause-and-effect transitions."

David Brenner: It's frequently the case that in scripts, storylines are more intercut because it makes scripts feel exciting and dynamic. But so often when you put the scenes together, you want to stick with a given character's stories longer and intercut a little less. Actually, I think you have put your finger on the biggest task we face when we're trying to deal with complex films with multiple storylines. That's exactly the dance. For me, I've always gone back to something that Roland Emmerich put his finger on: "Let's think in terms of cause and effect."

Stick with characters and their storylines, and when it's time to cut, try to find cause and effect transitions so that you feel like there's a reason that you're cutting to the next thing. Or ask a question as you end a scene, and then answer it in the next. That's not always possible, but it's great to find these connections. Or find some element in common with scene A and scene B, and use that to cut. When I cut Night and the City, in trying to trim two contiguous scenes, I found a moment where Robert De Niro looked at his watch in both scenes, so I match cut that action over the two scenes. And lost a ton of time. It was a cool cut and a good way to time cut—he's still waiting. When we intercut and when we stick with the story is one of our biggest problems. You realize that if you stick with one storyline for too long, it's going to be boring and lumpy. If you intercut too much, it's going to be confusing and aimless, and that's exactly the dance we have to do.

Hullfish: That sounds very similar to another great piece of advice from one of these interviews, which was "Never cut away from something. Cut to something." You're deciding, "Here's a place where I have a reason to go to something else instead of leaving a scene because I'm just done.

David Brenner: That's a really good way to put it.

Hullfish: Andrew, there's definitely some intercutting in Alice through the Looking Glass.

> "Usually what intercutting is about is creating tension or drawing parallels."

Andy Weisblum: There are a couple of instances in the movie where we changed inter-cut scenes in a way that was not "as scripted." There was restructuring in Time's castle and intercutting to make it so that Time was sitting with the Red Queen while Alice is trying to steal the Cronosphere. There is an inter-cut there that didn't exist as scripted. Those things needed to be parallel. Usually what intercutting is about is creating tension or drawing parallels, and the other bigger one is the section of the movie where Alice goes to what we call "Fell Day," which is the day where the young Princess hits her head. Alice is trying to stop her from hitting her head and at the same time Hatter is at the Tea Party on a different day and Time shows up there. Hatter realizes that this is the one who's been after Alice and who he's meant to stop. Time is being delayed and Alice is trying to solve the bigger problem. That's an inter-cut that changed several times because the movie is full of exposition and backstory. There are a lot of different ways to convey that stuff and really parse through what transitioned well from one idea to another idea or one location to another location so that you understood how everybody's related to each other, and that took some experimenting—partially for length, partially for clarity.

> "Try and parallel what each character wants."

Hullfish: What were some of the decisions of when exactly to cut between scenes?

Andy Weisblum: The biggest part of it is that that section of the movie felt very long, and the reason it felt long for us initially is that we had Sasha (actor, Sasha Baron Cohen) and Johnny (actor, Johnny Depp) together, so there was a lot of material at the tea party that was just riffing. It's all good fun, but there's a lot of story going on there

too, so we had four scenes there that were reduced to three slightly shorter ones, just trying to make it a "greatest hits"—escalating and keeping the story going. So, that was the biggest target. The other target was to try and parallel what each character wants. So, Alice is looking for the Queen, Time is looking for Alice, and each time we left each one of them, we wanted to reinforce their agenda. So, from "Where is she?" to "When is she coming?" Running parallels like that so that we knew that they're both looking for each other. So just trying to keep all that alive was a challenge.

Killing Your Babies and Eliminating Shoe Leather

> "It's about propelling the story and staying in front of the audience."

Hullfish: In every film I've cut, I thought, "We can't possibly cut this!" and in the end, we could. What were some of those decisions on Risen, Steven?

Steven Mirkovich: There was a character named Rebecca. She was Clavius's love interest. The scenes were very good, and on their own, played very well. Although we all loved the emotional performances the scenes delivered, we realized that losing them strengthened our lead, Clavius. He was a hardened soldier. Until it was lifted, we couldn't see how much it improved the story and the character. It's about propelling the story, from one scene to another and staying in front of the audience.

Hullfish: Glenn, one of the interesting things of you guys working as editors on your films is the struggle to cut great scenes you've written and directed.

> "You have to be willing to be brutal."

Glenn Ficarra: We're not precious at all. It's very rare cases where the script is the script. What actors can do with a look as opposed to saying the words … you have to be brutal. They call us "The Butchers of Burbank." So that thing where you have to be willing to kill your babies is first and foremost.

Hullfish: In the script you need the dialogue to tell the story, then you get into the edit suite, and an actor will give you a look that makes the four lines of dialogue that they say after it superfluous.

Glenn Ficarra: Yeah. We had three scenes of Kim and Ian falling in love in the movie, and now it's one scene. You realize that you don't have to take it any farther or spend more time on it, so let's condense the scenes.

Hullfish: Dan, any examples from one of your films? What scene got cut, and why did it get cut or moved in the structure of the story?

Dan Zimmerman: There're a few examples with My All American. The ironic thing is that they were scenes that Angelo and I really loved. Robin Tunney, who played the mom, says goodbye to her son Freddie, when he goes off to college. But the sequence before it is this joyful moment when Freddie and his girlfriend realize they are both going to Texas and celebrate. It then cuts to Freddy's first college football practice. But in-between, in the original script, was this scene of Robin saying goodbye and giving him a rosary. It was a very emotional, intimate and beautiful scene, but going from the celebration to the rosary scene felt as if it made the story stall. It's a scene that I'll forever miss, but it interrupted the trajectory of Freddy's story.

> "When you put all the scenes together, the perception of what you have changes."

Hullfish: And by sticking the rosary scene in, you're killing the rhythm of the movie.

Dan Zimmerman: That's exactly it.

Dan Hanley: When you're cutting the individual scenes, you could be thinking it's fantastic, but when you put all the scenes together as a whole, the perception of what you have changes. Scenes you thought were really good alone don't lend themselves to moving the movie along when they're assembled with other scenes. So then it's the process of chipping away at your babies, and the babies hit the cutting room floor. Trying to figure out the speed and tempo of the movie is always pretty darn interesting.

Hullfish: Let's talk about Ghostbusters. One of the things that fascinates me as an editor is when you determine that you can just make a jump in time. So one moment you're in the office and the next moment you're halfway to the destination or even at the destination.

Brent White: One of the things about Ghostbusters is that there's a lot of tech and a lot of gear and some of the most amazing stuff you've ever seen. You want to help that in a way, but you can only see them get dressed or get their gear on so many

times. So you do it in an earlier scene and kind of introduce the ECTO (the car), and then it's about getting to the next bit … the next funny piece.

Screening

Hullfish: In discussing the structure of the film, we started with the first screening of the movie with the director. Now, at the end of the process is screening the film for an audience. Glenn, talk to me about that process of putting something in front of a test audience. Many people have talked about how the chemistry of the movie changes pretty radically when you watch it with an audience.

Glenn Ficarra: Oh God, yes. Everything you ever thought was going to be funny goes out the window. You can feel it.

Joe Walker: When people are invited to come and sit in, it becomes a chemical thing. Some of the things you thought were working or that people would get, don't work. You can just feel it in the room. You know when the audience understands, and you know when it "over-stands." You're hyper-alert to the reactions. Those screenings really help you to know things like being five minutes too long in the first act of the movie. We need to get to this or that point by the end of reel 1, and when we do, this whole film is going to feel better. And finally you know when you're nearing a finished cut when you've got the audience leaning forward, eyes on stalks.

Hullfish: "Eyes on stalks." I have to remember that one.

Joe Walker: It was a phrase I heard: "You don't just want bums on seats, you want eyes on stalks."

Conrad Buff: I think it's important to run it for people, particularly if you can get objective people, that are not friends or studio people. There are a lot of friends-and-family screenings that are utilized for this process at the studio level. But I think it's better to have a more objective, real-world audience when possible. There are always things you learn, and great surprises, good and bad. You find out where laughs start, appropriate or inappropriate. You certainly find out where there are pacing issues or clarity problems. Maybe we need to slow down and reinforce this piece of information.

> "If you're in any doubt about where your pacing issues are, just sit in a room with 20 or 30 people."

Martin Walsh: It's all about how the movie feels overall. Watching it with an audience is always a pretty scary moment. If you're in any doubt at all about where your pacing issues are in a movie, just sit in a room with 20 or 30 people—even if they're friends and family. You'll feel it. You feel it immediately. The whole room sort of shifts at the same time. It's amazing the way it has an impact on a group of people.

Dan Zimmerman: I don't watch the movie when I watch it with other people. I watch them.

Hullfish: AH! I do the same thing. Standing at the side of the theater, sometimes watching faces instead of the screen.

Dan Zimmerman: Absolutely. I've actually gone as far as to stand in the exit door hallway—at test screenings—because I can get a clear shot at everyone's face in the audience, and I'm constantly watching how they're reacting. I want to know what they're feeling and how they're feeling.

Hullfish: Eddie, final thoughts on this altered perception of seeing your work through the eyes of others? You studied psychology in college, not film, right?

Eddie Hamilton: I studied visual perception and audio perception, and so I have a background in this kind of stuff. I'll give you my pet theory: When you go in to a theater, you are sitting in a dark room watching a very large image projected, and your entire field of vision is taken up by the experience of watching the movie, and all you're hearing is the sound from the movie, which can become a very emotional and very immersive experience, and your entire brain is focused on processing the images and the sound. And because that is all that you are doing, you process them faster because your entire focus of perception is drinking the images and the emotions off the screen and taking the story from the sound and the emotions from the music; therefore, images on the big screen seem slower because you are more attentive to them, if that makes sense. When you are watching a smaller screen, you have multiple distractions of your mobile phone and somebody walking up and down the corridor outside and your timeline next to you which you may be glancing at, so ironically, you are less focused in the edit suite unless it's a really large screen and you turn off your editing monitors. So that is why I feel that when you watch your movie on the big screen it seems slower.

Hullfish: What about just a general perception of watching your film with an audience?

Eddie Hamilton: I saw Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation on the big screen probably around 40 times, probably 20 times with just the director and myself and a few people and probably 20 times with an audience. Every single time I watched it with an audience, my "Spidey-sense" was on fire as to how they were reacting to the film second by second. You know what it's like. The moment you watch it with an audience, it's a completely different experience, and you're acutely aware of whether you're getting laughs where you want them or whether they are distracted or whether they are completely engaged and you can hear a pin drop in the theater.

Hullfish: That's fascinating, isn't it? The way that you feel when you sit with an audience … you don't even have to see the notes, right? You feel different.

Jeffrey Ford: I don't need any notes. The audience can be an audience of one person. It's one of those magical movie things, when you bring other people in to watch it with you, you have some kind of weird psychic connection. You're all experiencing the same thing, and you feed on each other's energy. I remember the first time we screened this movie, I wasn't sure how it was going to go, and Kevin Feige's assistant was sitting next to me, and just from her energy in the screening, I could tell that we were really in the zone. It's a big thrill to screen one of these and have the audience really respond. I don't need to hear a focus group after that. I don't need that to tell me what to do. We all know what we need to address after these screenings for the most part. You can feel those moments where something drags when you screen it with an audience. That's why it's essential to test these films. I can't tell you how many times I've come out of a preview and gone, "Oh my god. I've got to move this faster. The audience is way ahead of it." That's where you learn you need to over-drive it.

Tom McArdle: Having people in a screening makes you really concentrate, and you're also stressing out—there's a heightened sensitivity—and you can feel things in your gut, like: "OK, that scene is in pretty good shape. But this other part is dragging. It has to go, and so on." You can also study body language too. If you're situated behind the audience, when they're sitting still and really watching it, they're probably compelled, but if they're getting antsy and moving around in another part, you think, "OK, maybe this part needs some work."

Hullfish: On Ghostbusters, you took this screening thing a step further, right, Brent?

Brent White: (Laughs sinisterly) We do a thing where we record the audience. We record the laughs, and then we take the laughs back to the cutting room, and we marry it to that version of the movie, and so now I have a version of the movie with literally

a laugh track, and so as we're going forward and adjusting the movie and fixing the movie, I have a record of how they reacted.

First Assembly in TV

Hullfish: Film and dramatic TV have some big differences in regards to structure and timing. Most TV needs to be a specific length. Some TV needs to be a very specific length. Also, most TV is structured specifically around commercial breaks, so even individual segments of stories have to be timed out. Kelley Dixon has edited some of the great TV shows in recent years. What are the arguments and notes that are causing scenes or parts of scenes to be cut or re-arranged, Kelley?

> "**Everything** should be in service of the story."

Kelley Dixon: When getting time out of a show, you have to look at possible redundancy of ideas; does the audience already know something but the characters do not? Does the show go flat at a certain point? Is there something unclear? Everything should be in service of the story.

Hullfish: It's not that unusual to be 20% over the length on a first cut of a feature film. What about TV?

Sidney Wolinsky: I had a Sopranos episode that might have been 80 minutes, my first cut. And that ended up as 55 minutes or something. The same is true for the show I just finished. I had some very long episodes that ended up needing to be cut down. I would say that's pretty standard now on television shows as well.

Hullfish: Joe, how often are you long?

Joe Mitacek, Grey's Anatomy: If we have an episode that's 2 minutes over, then we're probably going to tighten it down, and I'll do a few line lifts and that's that. Little surgical line lifts tend to be invisible. The deeper cuts get tricky, like when you're cutting 10, 12, 15 minutes—which doesn't happen all that often—but when it does, you can sort of surgically trim lines here and there, but then you actually get into deeper cuts where you're ripping a section out of the scene, and now we have to figure out a way to glue it together.

Hullfish: Sidney, talk to me about your process on those shows that are running too long.

> "The decisions are not that hard when you become analytical about what the story is."

Sidney Wolinsky: When I'm doing my cut, my only concern is getting everything cut as it was written and shot, and I don't worry about length. Typically a director wants to see everything they've shot. So there's no upside to saying "We don't need this scene." Really, until the show's finished shooting, I don't know how long the show's gonna be. I frequently get asked to give the script person or producer an estimate of the length of the cut scenes versus what the script continuity person is estimating, so they can see how long they can project the show to be and sometimes they'll start throwing out scenes … omitting scenes from the script because they feel like they've got too much. At that point, depending on the director and the showrunner, the director and I may start trying to cut it down. And at some point it's handed over to the showrunner, and that person will start getting it to length. My feeling is always that there's stuff that can go. And really, I'm always amazed at the writer's mind, and I'll be blown away by a writer or director who will say, "We don't need that scene because the next scene or the previous scene says the same thing." And I'll go, "Holy cow, you're right." Often the decisions you make are not that hard when you become analytical about what the story is and the information you're trying to convey.

Hullfish: Amen. So while we're talking about getting to that next section of going through the notes with the producer. Talk to me about the structure of a 30-minute show, getting it to time and having the act breaks happen at those commercial breaks where they're supposed to happen and feeling comfortable about that.

David Helfand, Great News: It depends on the platform. On premium cable or streaming network, you still have act breaks in terms of story structure—building towards peak moments and climaxes—they just won't be interrupted. We're free to construct the show as we like so long as it falls within a target range between 20 and 30 minutes.

On networks with commercials, breaks are written into the script, but sometimes you have to find new ones. It comes down to pacing and understanding story structure to build to a dilemma where people feel compelled to see how it plays out. Besides making things funny and flow, you also have to meet network requirements that it be exactly 21:30 and act breaks fall on a:00 timecode frame, so it can be tricky, if not annoying. When we're close, I'll do a squeeze pass just before locking, where I'll shave 5 frames here, 12 there, to get the time out without affecting timing in a way anyone feels. But as time is lifted, an act can't be too short or the audience will feel cheated.

Reordering scenes can help, although Friends had A, B and C stories that were tricky to juggle. Other times, you might heighten the middle beat of a truncated scene with music or a camera move to make it function as an act break. The Great News pilot was completed with 3-act structure, but the network wants the series to have 4, and fortunately I found a split that makes sense and keeps the acts well balanced.

For students of story, structure is an essential element in delivering story to an audience. Structure is the vehicle for information and how it's parceled out. Think of the classic stories that you love. Many of those stories are deeply connected to the structure that supports them. That's why—in the structure of this book—the chapter on storytelling follows the chapter on structure. Storytelling depends on structure, and now that we understand the implications of structure to the film, we are prepared to discuss the intricacies of story.

Chapter 5
Storytelling

To call the editor a "storyteller" is cliché and blatantly obvious at an elemental level —at least to fellow editors.

But many outside the profession fail to grasp how thoroughly affected the story is by the editor. Even if an editor follows the script to the letter, they are telling the story through their perspective choices, the moments that receive special emphasis, the choice of performance, the choice of music and sound, the way the story is paced. Virtually everything that the editor does should enhance and progress the story. And the script in many cases is only a general blueprint for what the director and editor end up doing with the story and the structure of the story. These changes have an even more profound effect on the story.

Throughout this chapter—and in fact, throughout this entire book—you'll see the way the editor partners with the director as the ultimate storytelling team. There are several ways this happens. With some editors, who have won the trust of their directors or even the trust of the entire producing team, they are brought on early, and their advice is sought even before the movie is shot. These trusted collaborators are able to affect the script itself. Many editors on the subsequent pages will make the argument that editing is actually a form of writing. It also delivers a sense of perspective, character and structure.

To be an editor is to be a student of story, a steward of story and a shaper of story.

Editing is Foundational to Storytelling

> "I personally think the first priority for the editor is the story."

Hullfish: Tom, how much do you think of yourself as a storyteller?

Tom McArdle, Spotlight: I personally think the first priority for the editor is the story. I work to serve the story, to make sure that it flows and that things are clear.

Hullfish: So many movie goers think that the script is the story, and the editor just follows that, but that's not true.

Stephen Mirrione, The Revenant: Of course, a film editor is involved in the final re-write, the person who helps the movie cross the finish line into its final form.

Margaret Sixel, Mad Max: Fury Road: It's a cliché to say editing is largely misunderstood, but that's the truth. Even people who work in film don't always get it. With readily available software, most people can do basic editing. It's one thing to routinely put shots together, but it's another thing to forge a persuasive experience.

The editor comes on when most things are already fixed, but there is always room to move, and the edit is the final re-write. For some films, this is even more true than for others.

Fury Road wasn't a film you could restructure in a big way, as it was quite linear and took place over three days, but there were things that were problematic and required some mental gymnastics.

Editors definitely bring their own personalities, tastes, aesthetics into the work. Every day, one is making constant choices … is that a better performance, do those shots cut together, do we need a pick up, what can I achieve with VFX, is that music corny, can I repurpose any footage?

Hullfish: Kelley, what tangible ways are you a storyteller in the edit room?

Kelley Dixon, Breaking Bad: Definitely with montages. They show a lot in a short time, and they are opportunities to be much more creative than conventional editing. But really, as an editor, you are the first person to mold the pieces. You find the emphases, and you decide how to show them. You decide who gets moments onscreen and whose moments are shown on the reacting actor, and why! You decide how to open and close a scene. What the audience is left with. Is it satisfying, horrifying, jarring, unfinished, emotional, bereft, etc. You cut actors' performances together to make the best possible use of the work. You can be cutty, linger, hold characters at arm's length or further, be close with them, be close but disgusted by them, have an intimate understanding with their inner thoughts, keep them facing away to the point of frustration—which then becomes a style of sorts.

> "Emotion, character, story: the scene or shot must give us those."

Hullfish: Cheryl, you got to edit alongside Pietro Scalia on The Martian. Any Pietro wisdom on story?

Cheryl Potter, The Martian: Simplicity is one thing. Not just in the edit, but certainly there. Emotion, character, story—they're the three big ones. Is the scene or shot giving us those? If not, do we need it? Are we telling the story in the best way? Are we getting the information from more than one place, and do we need to? For example, when Watney has the idea to use the potatoes, we used to have a version with voice-over that spelled that out, but you get that information from the images, so Pietro dropped the voice-over, and as a result you see Watney have the idea, and you actually kind of have it with him, instead of being told with VO. It's really good storytelling and draws you in as a viewer.

Hullfish: Pietro, earlier you told me: "Editing is a form of writing."

Pietro Scalia, The Martian: Writing and re-writing—you always make it better. Editing is writing with visuals. At its core, it's the most cinematic of all arts because you use the visuals and sound, and you tell a story. There's syntax. There are phrases. There's movement. There's rhythm. These are all elements that are also part of writing.

> "Editing is writing with visuals. At its core, it's the most cinematic of all arts."

Hullfish: Never be boring.

Pietro Scalia: Never be boring, exactly, that's what Ridley says, "Never be boring." Good story telling.

Hullfish: Dan, what real storytelling input do you have as the editor?

Dan Zimmerman, Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials: People will say, "Don't you have a script to go by? Don't you just edit to that?" And the answer is, "Yes, you do." But what was in the script is not necessarily representative of what was shot, and what's shot may not represent what the movie ends up being. Ultimately, editing is your final re-write. There's a motivation and a purpose behind it all, but you can only manipulate the footage you have to a certain degree. Those degrees are pretty varied. You can take a movie that was meant to be a comedy and turn it into a dramatic tragedy, depending on the pieces you decide to use. So the swing is big, but at the end of the day, you have to rely on the footage you have because you can't create footage. You have devices like ADR, which you can use to patch something in a situation

where it wasn't captured on film, or you want to change the intent in the editing room, or if you have a movie that's being narrated, you have a lot of flexibility in trying to get the movie to go along a certain story path. This is why I love editing the most because we really are a part of all the facets of the moviemaking process. You're reading the script, and you may or may not have input, but you have your ideas on the script, and you're seeing the footage as it's being handed off and all of the limitations that come along with it. You know, "We got to the set, and we thought we were going to be shooting in a 10,000 square foot location, and we ended up shooting in a closet. So how do we make that work?" So there's all that, and it lands on your desk, and you have to sort it out. So you have to take the intention of the script, match it with the intention of the performances and the images that you get and ultimately tell that story through editing.

Hullfish: Billy, how—with a cut—does the editor become storyteller?

> "One of the fascinating things about storytelling in editing is how much you can communicate by saying so little."

Billy Fox, Straight Outta Compton: Oftentimes in a script they need a certain line of dialogue that explains something or makes something clear so the story is sold. But now you've hired good caliber actors, who really know their shit, and it's up to a good editor to realize, "We don't need that line anymore because this actor was so good that I already know that information. We don't need that line because the audience is crystal clear." And in fact, by including that line, you're slowing the story down and making it less emotional. You needed to have it at some point, but you don't need it now. I love the technique in editing where you eliminate a whole chunk, and you think, "We can't lose that, it's so important," but you try and then you say, "Wow. A) I don't miss it and B) I get it." That's one of the fascinating things about storytelling in editing is how much you can communicate by saying so little.

Hullfish: Dylan, can you think of specific moments where you said, I could've cut this together in this certain way, but in order to best tell the story, that's why I chose this close-up or that's why I did something the way I did, because I was specifically trying to do something for the story instead of for any other reason?

Dylan Highsmith, Star Trek Beyond: In every stage, there's always a part where you sacrifice a good edit for better storytelling or a camera move that looks great in a **oner**, but if you can cut it in half you might be able to use this piece earlier on and have it have more emotional impact and then come back to it later.

Oner: A scene or a large portion of a scene that is shot all in one continuous take.

There're probably several bad cuts in my scenes that I think were absolutely integral for preserving what the story was. Across the board, it's always more important to "kill your babies," as the phrase goes, in service of the story. This specific example I'm talking about is a great one-shot of Kirk in the Takedown sequence. We really needed to clock in with Kirk at a key emotional beat in the scene. I think we all decided that instead of preserving the integrity of the 360 shot, it was better to cut it in two so we could take the first half and move it earlier where we needed to clock him for this emotional beat, and then we could come back and use the tail of it later for the kinetic energy.

"It's always more important to 'kill your babies' in service of the story."

Hullfish: Jeff, tell me a little about being a storyteller as an editor and some of the things that you were able to contribute to the story in post.

Jeffrey Ford, Captain America: Civil War: Joe and Anthony Russo are storytellers first and foremost. In fact we always say, as we're cutting the picture, "Is the storytelling working?" Not "Is the movie working?" Not "Is the shot working?" Not "Is the photography working?" Not "Are the special effects working?"—we say, "Is the storytelling working?" What that means is: "Are we constantly moving the story forward in an interesting way?" They were so vigilant during the screenwriting process, and I was so privileged to be included in that and it was a great honor to be able to suggest things and make comments about the way things were structured during the screenwriting process because, boy it's a lot easier to change it on the page than it is once you've shot it.

"We must constantly move the story forward in an interesting way."

Hullfish: Glenn, for a long time, you were probably best known as a screenwriter, but on Whiskey Tango Foxtrot you were both co-writer and co-editor (not to mention co-director). I think editing is very similar to writing, don't you think?

Glenn Ficarra, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: A lot of people say, "Editing is the final re-write." I believe that. Editing is very akin to writing, and John and I really treat it as such. We're really flexible, and because we're so collaborative as a writing team, we're constantly re-inventing the movie. That's the way we work as writers. I find it very similar. Little moves can mean a lot. Even the intention of what you did is not necessarily what you're committing to.

Hullfish: The intention of what you did in the writing? I'm not following.

Glenn Ficarra: The intention of what you did on the set doesn't necessarily have to be what you put up on the screen.

Hullfish: That's true.

> "The intention of what you did on the set doesn't have to be what you put up on the screen."

Glenn Ficarra: You might have shot a scene to be dramatic and decide that you want to make it comic, or withhold information or anything like that. It's just so similar to writing, it kind of comes naturally.

Hullfish: Jake, I'm fascinated by the fact that your father was a screenwriter. I think of the screenwriter and the editor as two halves of a whole: the beginning and the end. Talk to me about your sense of story.

Jake Roberts, Brooklyn: I think it's absolutely essential. Some people have said to me that editing is essentially re-writing the film. Certainly it is a very similar narrative process. The structure that's there in the script may or may not work as intended, so the rhythms of that structure may have to change. Twenty pages of script, which would be your first act, may actually distend to 40 minutes or more of screen time, and in the edit you need to get it back to 20 minutes because that's the right rhythm for the piece, so you need a very good understanding of which bits you need to keep and which bits you can lose. I think narrative storytelling comes down to two things: information and timing; what information does the audience need and when do you give it to them? And I think inevitably it must have helped for me to grow up reading screenplays and talking about them and watching movies. I did a lot of documentaries for many years, and the type of documentaries where you're dealing with hundreds of hours of footage and no coherent narrative plan. That's such great schooling for telling a story because you are literally writing the narrative as you go and imposing

that narrative structure yourself, because documentaries tend to conform to the same principles of storytelling. So if you can wrestle 250 hours of random footage into a coherent 90-minute piece with acts and structure, by the time you get to making a feature film with a script by a talented writer, which has been developed for months, if not years, it's—I wouldn't say "easy"—but a lot of the heavy lifting has been done for you. For me, documentary was a great training ground in that respect.

> "Storytelling comes down to two things: what information does the audience need and when do you give it to them?"

Hullfish: John, can you think of specific things where you told the story with an edit instead of just by following the script?

John Refoua, Magnificent Seven: That always happens. You read the script, and on the page it's great. But when you're on location, there are so many things that are different. You can't just be blindly following the script. The script is something you read, but a movie is something that you watch. You watch things differently than you read things. For example, it's easy to read the script and see that the guy is angry or he is worried, but how do you convey that visually?

Hullfish: Exactly.

Speaking into the Script

Hullfish: Editors do have a feel for the story issues that others might not see or feel at the script stage. Issues I see in the script before shooting are always the same issues I have to deal with in post. Do you get any chance to speak into that?

David Brenner, Batman v Superman: I tend to speak up only if there's something I feel super strongly about, or if I think there's an extra piece to shoot that could help the build of the story. I try not to be a pain in the ass until we actually start editing. Most of the questions that I have are usually things that I know we can address then. Reduce things; move things around. Zack knew that on Man of Steel, we addressed a lot of script questions in the film editing so he was confident we could do it again.

Hullfish: Mary Jo, talk to me about the editor as storyteller. You guys are in the enviable position that you get a chance to give notes on the script up front. Were you able to supply that kind of story input on this movie as well?

Mary Jo Markey, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: The story contributions were more during the break we took when Harrison Ford broke his ankle. That gave us a chance to sit back and look at what we had, and we had some script input at that point. J. J. spent a lot of time re-writing.

Hullfish: What were some of the changes?

Maryann Brandon, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: They had already shot Harrison's entrance through the door on the Millennium Falcon. In the original scene, Finn and Rey weren't hiding, they were just standing there. It didn't give Han and Chewy enough of a moment. And we figured it could be a bigger, better moment if they were hiding and afraid—and let Han have this moment where the audience could applaud and give it a breath.

Mary Jo Markey: It's so much better than the original. And one thing that J. J. had an instinct about right from when he was shooting it, was the first meeting between Finn and Rey, when BB-8 recognizes Poe's jacket on Finn and Rey chases him. The writing of that changed during the hiatus, and he did re-shoot it. In the first version, Finn acknowledged to Rey immediately that he was a stormtrooper. J. J. and I felt he wouldn't do this. He doesn't know who this girl is. She also just chased him down. So why is he, in that moment, going to speak the truth to her? It just turned out to be a plot turn that had resonance through the whole script, because then he has the moment where he has to confess to her that he didn't tell her the truth, and it becomes this much deeper moment between them.

Maryann Brandon: Plus it gave Han the chance to say, "Women always know the truth."

Hullfish: And it gave the audience a chance to wonder when he would get discovered. So: nice tension.

Maryann Brandon: Emotionally, Finn had a ways to go to figure out that not only was he going to be a defector, but he was going to end up fighting for the right side. That's a big journey, and you've got to space that out.

Mary Jo Markey: In that original scene, it didn't really help you fall in love with Finn right away. Now, I think he's so charming where he sees the way Rey looks at him and says, "Absolutely! I'm with the Resistance!" It's a much more charming scene than it was before.

> "As an audience member, how I understand or what I need to understand is always important."

Andy Weisblum, Alice Through the Looking Glass: I definitely read things in a script, and I know, "I need to see that happen to understand that, or I need to cut to this character or to these things so we understand how they feel about it" if it's not presented as expositional information. Or if there is a lot of description in this script or lack thereof where you realize how a line feeds into another line or a moment leads into another moment; if I don't immediately know what it is, I'll underline it, and I'll say to the director "How are we going to understand this?" "How are you going to show me this?" Or "How do we attack this, do you have an idea?" Oftentimes we read things in the script that's a writer's conceit. Conceptually it makes a lot of sense that this idea is the reason that the character acts a certain way, but "How do I understand that as an audience member or what do I need to understand as an audience member?" is always important.

Hullfish: Scene description oftentimes leaves you wondering: "How is this visualized"?

Andy Weisblum: Right. One of the things I started to look at on this movie is, "How do we understand that Hatter realizes that he needs to stall Time?" It wasn't necessarily clear in the dialogue, so we adjusted the dialogue a little bit to make sure we understood it and made sure that he reacted to specific things to try and pull that out, and it becomes clear that you don't want to get so far ahead that you don't understand what his goal is, otherwise there is no reason for the scene.

Hullfish: I totally understand. The Mad Hatter doesn't really realize who Time is …

Andy Weisblum: All he knows is that Time is after this girl, Alice, and Alice has warned him that if he doesn't help her, then she'll fail and something will happen to his parents. That's what he understands. And that's it. So how do you help clarify that? That's actually a pretty big pill. So mostly it's just that you want to understand that he's some guy who is after that girl and doesn't quite understand what's going on, but he should probably help her out. And as long as we can sell that bill of goods, then we are on the right track.

Hullfish: In a TV drama, you might even cut to a flashback …

Image 5.1 Guy Pearce in the movie Brimstone. Photo by Philippe Antonello. Courtesy of N279 Entertainment.

Andy Weisblum: Exactly. There are plenty of tools and crutches that you can lean on, but it's not necessarily fun. It's also hard with a movie like this that has so much story to it and so many different characters and motivations to keep it clear for the audience. People will automatically assume kids won't understand certain things—which I find to be generally untrue. I think kids make easier leaps than adults do, in terms of imagination and instinct. And sometimes it's when the information gets more complicated, they don't really care about it as long as there is a common denominator underneath it.

Hullfish: Eddie, did you wish, at least for someone who is as interested in story, that you could speak into the script before you start to shoot?

> "It's the editor's job to articulate why they're about to shoot a scene that's going to hit the cutting room floor."

Image 5.2 Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation editing team, Tom Harrison-Read (1st assistant), Martin Corbett (1st assistant), Eddie Hamilton (editor), Rob Sealey (2nd assistant), Christopher Frith (trainee).

Eddie Hamilton, Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation: Quite often I do. For example, on X-Men: First Class, I worked for two months before the shoot. I was working on pre-vis, trying to solve story problems in a small way, but I was also reading drafts and feeding back to the director (and co-writer) Matthew Vaughn. There are a lot of people who have opinions on those big films. On Matthew Vaughn's Kingsman sequel, I am going to be on board for four months of prep, working with Matthew and the other HODs (head of department—camera, art, locations, lighting, sound, post, etc.) to give some storytelling input. I think he's hoping to avoid unnecessary shooting and discover story kinks in the way that an animated film does where they cut and review story reels, so they can make decisions about what they're going to animate because animation is so expensive. He wants to prep the film in terms of story very, very thoroughly and try to figure out the pace of the movie so there isn't much waste on the set.

> "It doesn't matter how much action you have, if it's not grounded in the characters and the emotional arc of the story, it's gonna be boring."

It is your job as the editor to put your hand up and tell people (if you have that sort of collaborative relationship with a producer or director), articulate to them why they're about to spend money on a scene that's going to hit the cutting room floor, and if you have a very good reason for it, you should speak. The other thing that is interesting is that if you are going for an interview with a director for a gig, quite often you do get to read the script. And I think that is one thing which they value enormously in an editor is a storytelling collaborator and somebody who has the best interest of the film at heart and somebody who will fight in the film's corner regardless of schedule and budget. If I feel we need a shot, I will always say "We need this shot," and it may be inconvenient or it may cost a little bit more money, but I know it will be cheaper to do it now than to do it in six months or not to have it, in which case the film won't be as good. Most people respond favorably if you speak up.

Character

Read any Hollywood book on scriptwriting and story, and you'll see an emphasis on character. Character and perspective through character are a prime hunting ground for editors looking for story.

> "Any story starts with character. The decisions are based on character."

Pietro Scalia: Any story starts with character. The decisions are based on character. Who is this character? Where are we with the character? What reinforces character? How does the identification process happen with the viewer? What are the moments that build character? Are those moments essential to the story? How does the character grow? Because you're going to find the character at the beginning is going to go through some transformation. So the thing for me is to build character. The second decision that layers on top is, "What is essential to the story?" What are the causes and effects of the story? Why am I showing this? What information do I get from this point in the narrative? How do I move the story along? Am I telling it well? Am I drifting? And finally is structure. Should one moment precede another moment or follow it? It will give me a different effect of what happens afterwards. We had a flashback in the middle of The Martian, which was in the script, where we introduce Hermes as a flashback of the accident that happened on Mars. It worked really well in the script, and it's great to start the movie without seeing the accident, but when we edited the movie following the script, the movie just came to a complete stop 40 minutes in. So we re-structured it and put the flashback at the beginning of the film. It's a little more conventional, but it gets you going. When we find Mark Watney by himself, thinking about the crew members, we already have an image of them.

So character, story, structure.

> "A lot of good storytelling has to do with point of view."

Stephen Mirrione: A lot of good storytelling has to do with point of view, making sure your audience understands what the characters are thinking and feeling and how different characters can perceive the same moment in different ways.

Steven Sprung, Star Trek Beyond: It doesn't matter how much action you have, if it's not grounded in the characters and the emotional arc of the story, it's gonna be boring.

So we're always protecting that. There's one moment on the Franklin when the crew is planning their next move. At the very end of the scene, there's a moment of Kirk, Spock and Bones reacting to Jayla storming out. I used this moment where they look at each other. It was powerful, but later on we're talking about it, and none of us could articulate the exact meaning of that moment because it's not about plot. It's one of those moments that just adds dimension.

Dylan Highsmith: That's so important for Justin, who is an action director. He always wants to make sure you're seeing the action through the character every step of the way. Most of the action in this is very "ensemble" so we're always making sure we're not away from a character for too long, that we're not outside of a character's headspace for too long. That's always the directive that every scene is designed that way, and I hope it shows.

Hullfish: How do your editing choices inform the story?

> "An editor should be able to answer why they did what they did for almost any moment."

Image 5.3 Aaron Paul and Bryan Cranston in AMC's Breaking Bad. Courtesy of Sony Pictures Television.

Kelley Dixon: When making a plan for cutting a scene, developing character, etc.—that an editor should be able to answer why they did what they did for almost any moment. There is always a small percentage of cuts where you cut because you had to (actor, camera didn't cooperate) or just because it "felt" right (in service to your other decisions). Many times I watch dailies, then digest them for awhile before beginning to cut. Mostly because I'm forming my own understanding of character, motivation, how this scene juxtaposes with those around it, what does it mean. I need to be able to

answer those questions before I'm finished with the scene. Otherwise, it's just a puzzle I'm fitting together … without much depth, meaning or purpose. I might be way off the mark from the writer, or producers, or director. Or they might be! Many times I've found that they've written it to be one thing. But once it's been acted, shot, cut into a sequence, it lives and breathes as something more, or entirely different. You have to be willing and able to lay aside preconceived notions and reexamine it in the new context. And much of the time, writers/producers/directors will be unwilling, and force it into the original intent. But I feel it's my responsibility to discover different ways it can live. It definitely trains you to be more rounded in your approach and to constantly analyze your story sense and character motivation.

Be on top of your choices. Know what they mean to you, to the character, to the story. Sometimes you can cut to look cool. But mostly it should be to tell the story.

> "Be on top of your choices. Know what they mean to you, to the character, to the story."

Hullfish: Let's talk about how you were—as the editor—a storyteller in Joy.

Tom Cross, Joy: David O. Russell is a remarkably precise storyteller when it comes to emotions. He really wants to calibrate each character's emotions in a way that feels very authentic, and he doesn't want anything to be false or feel constructed. He wrote this very dense script, which was incredible and full of so many amazing details and character riches. When he shoots, he makes very specific choices regarding camera and performance, but he also shoots a lot of different options. He'll shoot the characters going off on these branches—and I don't even like to call it improv because it's not really. He'll have the characters do a pass on the scene with a certain level of emotion, and then he'll work with the actors to re-calibrate them and then do a different emotional pass. Sometimes he'll shoot scenes where you'll have a little moment with another character nested within that scene, but he may shoot a different scene somewhere else in the movie and have that same beat and that same character nested into that scene. He does that because he wants to give himself options in the editing room, with where to put a certain beat. He is really brilliant at this because he knows that there's a transformation that takes place when you commit something to film. What you get in dailies is often different from what was originally envisioned. So the story itself winds up having some elasticity, and he just likes to prepare for that.

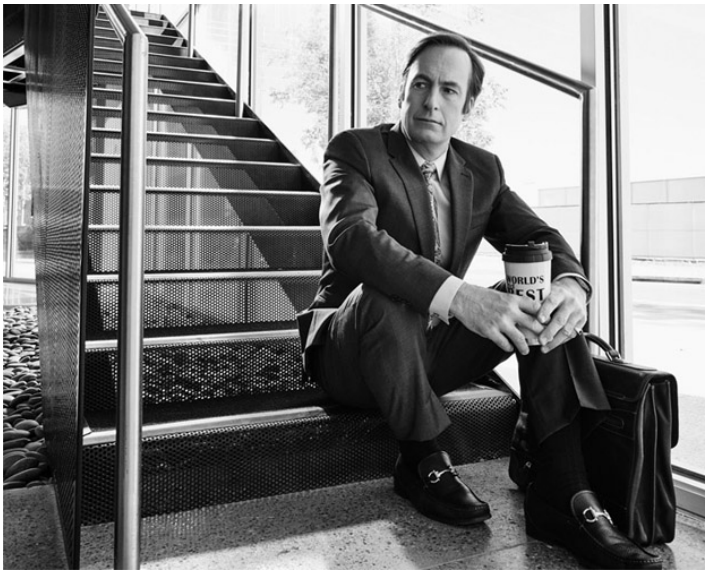


Image 5.4 Bob Odenkirk in AMC's Better Call Saul. Courtesy of Sony Pictures Television.

We found the same thing on Whiplash. The script was tight as a drum, no pun intended. It really felt like it was perfect, but once it was shot and you got in the editing room—Surprise! Surprise!—you learn there're a lot of things that you don't need and that less is more. At the same time, you also find things that seem extremely clear in the script are actually confusing when you put the pieces together. So you have to re-engineer it in a certain way. David really tries to keep that in mind. He knows that you might want to put a story beat somewhere else in a movie. So he'll shoot that story beat in a couple of different places. He knows that he's going to work closely with the editors to find the perfect place to put that beat.

> "It's the emotional continuity that drives the story and holds the film together. Everything else is secondary."

David doesn't get hung up on physical geography and space. He is the first one to tell you to give that up in exchange for something that feels emotionally right. He is very specific about visual style—just look at the opening shots of The Fighter or Silver Linings Playbook—but ultimately, it's the emotional continuity that drives the story and holds the film together. Everything else is secondary.

Hullfish: Jeff, you are constantly moving back and forth between these big set-piece action sequences and then to scenes that make you care about the characters you're watching, because otherwise you don't care who gets hit or who dies.

Jeffrey Ford: That's very true. One of the things that happened was that the fight at the airport never worked until we had the pieces in that provided those character moments, because so much of that scene was shot without the benefit of the actors. They weren't there. Those are either stunt players or they're fully CG. So the fight between Captain America and Spiderman was acted by Chris (actor, Chris Evans) and Tom (actor, Tom Holland) and we embellished it, so that was a place where I could cut with performance, but when it comes to the other material, a lot of time it doesn't coalesce until a lot later in the process when we have all the ADR, until we shot Robert in his HUD (heads up display), until we start to connect these areas that are related to character. So it's a tricky balance in those action scenes, but I think Joe and Anthony make it a mandate to always build the action around character, and that's what always saves us because it is interleaved. It's not just a lot of punching and pounding, there are moments of comedy, and there are moments of character conflict and drama that rears its head in the midst of the fight, and that's really where it starts to kick off.

Mary Jo Markey: In the cutting of a scene, especially when you're cutting a character like BB-8—we have all this footage of this little droid doing little things like rocking back and forth or cocking his head or looking up at Rey or looking out at the desert, and you really do end up creating the beginnings of a bond between him and Rey just by those little pieces of film. I tried to create this idea that he's almost immediately enamored with her. He's just fascinated by her and thrilled by her. There's a lot of material to choose from in all that BB-8 footage. I think that's a perfect example of the editor as storyteller. You're creating that relationship between those characters with no dialogue.

Perspective

This is a sub-set of the concept of character. An editor needs to have their own personal perspective on a scene, but often that perspective is to view the scene from the vantage point of a specific character.

> "The editor is a storyteller when he decides where you go in the scene."

Steven Mirkovich, Risen: I think that the editor is a storyteller when he decides where you go in the scene. Where is the editor putting you? Is he putting you on a character in the scene for his reaction? Or is it more important to be on the man delivering the line? Is it more important to be delivering half the line or …? You get the point. It comes down to "feel" when I'm editing. It's subjective, and we all tell stories

differently. I think “As an audience member where do I want to be? Who do I want to be on, and for how long? Where does my eye want to go?” My gut instinct is my guide. I trust it. Also, I don’t like to telegraph reactions by going to somebody too soon. People process very quickly now, so anytime you telegraph and the audience catches up with you, you’re dead.

I remind myself this is not an actor’s show reel. This is a scene in a movie. It’s about the story.

Kelley Dixon: One of the things I learned on Breaking Bad that I’ve taken into everything since then, is that it’s way more interesting and fun to be with Jessie and Walt as they do stuff, not watching them do stuff from far away.

One of my favorite shots is a profile shot, because most of the time a profile is nobody’s P.O.V. A profile shot almost seems like you are right next to that person, which is a very intimate place to be. As an editor, it’s basically like you’re able to use it to put the audience into a position where nobody is. It’s almost like you’re just sharing a secret or sharing a little bit of intimate space with the actor. Another trick: On Breaking Bad we got to be very creative with a lot of different editing styles because it was encouraged. We started to get really good at it.

One of the things that I did in Breaking Bad was to cut things that were intentionally out of sync and then letting the sync catch up. One of the ways I definitely did that was in this season of Better Call Saul. It was a scene with Kim on the phone with some Post-It notes. She’s trying to drum up business, and everybody is just saying “No. no, no.” And it was written in a systematic regular way where she’s making phone calls and then coming up and crossing out names, and I just took it and started to jumble up those phone calls. So it made it seem more of a cacophony. The director saw it and loved it, but I think when the writer saw it, it really threw her. Writers get very caught up in what they’ve been living with for so long, and I respect that because I’m a writer as well so I totally understand.

Structure

Though we had an entire chapter on structure, it is certainly part of the storytelling process, so we visit the concept here as well.

Hullfish: Julian, talk to me about the role of the editor as a storyteller inside of the collaborative process of filmmaking.

Julian Clarke, Deadpool: A movie isn't even a movie until it's been edited, so the screenplay is like the blueprint and then the shooting is the gathering of the raw material, but it's not really a movie until you edit it, so that really is the final part where it all comes together into a story. In that sense, it absolutely is storytelling. In terms of demonstrating that the editor can be a storyteller with a single cut, and back to the syntax of the movie, it's all about juxtaposing shots and creating meaning between those shots and juxtapositions. Usually within a scene it's just this character's reaction to this other thing, but then, every once in a while, you can imply an entire piece of story that you don't see through a simple juxtaposition. One example of that is the recruiter in Deadpool in the bar is telling Wade that he can heal his cancer and turn Wade into a superhero, as Wade walks away and sits on his own, you have this slightly unsettled look, and then we juxtapose that to him sitting at a window with insomnia, and it's raining outside, and you kind of immediately understand that what's been said to him is gnawing away at him. That juxtaposition was not the way the sequence was written or shot. It was a created meaning in the edit suite. In this scene I'm referring to him sitting in the bar and looking troubled, that is an excessively long tail on a scene. In the original structure of how that scene would have been used, there was no need for him to sit down on his own again. That's just shoe-leather. But since we're now implying that what's been said is troubling him, because we've deleted four minutes of scenes that originally followed there, now suddenly that extra handle is sort of the thing that saves our ass and implies this thing that we didn't know we needed when we were shooting.

Hullfish: Stephen, you mentioned that you found the story of The Revenant in post, so talk to me a little bit about the story changes that you had to make in editing. How did you come across them, and why were they necessary?

Stephen Mirrione: One of the biggest tools we had in the storytelling for Glass' character were these dreams where he's in these hallucinatory states. That was loosely in the script, but as we were going along, we realized that we had to walk a line between how literal those dreams were versus abstract. Originally we wanted them to be completely abstract, but the problem you run into is that if they're so abstract that nobody understands what they mean, then they're not as useful as a storytelling tool, right? Because you really have to understand some of the events that happened in his life to understand his backstory, to understand what's driving him forward, and it really helped to connect with him and get inside his head, especially because—as written—the movie works perfectly great, but once the actors start infusing their life into the performances—like Tom Hardy ended up stealing the movie because he's got all these great monologues where you're learning all of his motivations, all of his backstory. You totally sympathize with him at a certain level, and Leo—the Glass charac-

ter—is competing with that by just having to look hungry or whatever the moment is. It's not fair. So we really had to lean on those dreams and structure those dreams so that they happened in places that helped inform all of the scenes that came afterwards and also, the entire section of the movie, once the Glass character is on his own, we had to do lot of restructuring between his journey and the other trappers, and how much of the other trappers to use. There's about 45 minutes of deleted scenes. A lot of that had to do with this journey that the trappers went on to get back. It was just a whole thing with too many strands of the story going, so we had to measure all of that and find a balance.

Jan Kovac, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: It's a living thing. You go from a blueprint to a house. When you're building it, sometimes you find it works better if you move the bathroom downstairs or take out a wall. I remember a scene where an Afghan fixer for Kim is reading a Q magazine as a comical beat as it was written in the script two-thirds into the movie, and Kim was responding to him reading it. But it seemed too on-the-nose at that point, so we cut it earlier, in front of a different scene, and then the callback to the joke worked better and was more effective.

Hullfish: Any editing changes in the structure of Star Wars: The Force Awakens?

> "Creating a point of view in a scene and seeing it through the eyes of the character is a very powerful editing tool."

Maryann Brandon: In a big way, one of the things we did was to pull the introduction of Leia out of the beginning of the film so that you could meet her again through Han Solo. That's a big build up in this film. In fact, throughout the film, introducing the old characters kept moving further and further back in the story. They used to all be introduced in the beginning, and we realized that the power of their introduction became much more emotionally satisfying by pushing it later. Things like creating a point of view in a scene and seeing it through the eyes of the character and understanding it through them is a very powerful tool that editors use.

Hullfish: Julian, you mentioned elsewhere that at one point you cut out four minutes, but you had to extend it three seconds. Why did the three seconds help the story when the four minutes were cut out?

Julian Clarke: Because of a bunch of structure/pace aspects, we cut out an entire section of multiple scenes where Deadpool is considering the recruiter's pitch. But when we cut them out, we used the extended three seconds of a scene of him sitting at

the window thinking to imply that he's thinking about accepting the recruiter's offer, which was the section we cut out. But in reality, the scene of thinking was originally shot to show him thinking about his cancer diagnosis. It was restructured to tell the story more succinctly.

A Student of Story

Learning should continue throughout your career. No matter how good you are, you need to learn. Since story is so central to the art of editing, an editor should become a student of story.

Stephen Mirrione: Storytelling is a skill that you can become better at through lots and lots of practice. As far as learning it, I have been learning it all my life. Through listening to other people tell stories, reading, watching movies, etc. A lot of the storytelling—all of the detail work and the choreography of the scenes—was meticulously planned out and done with as much attention to detail as possible, but the overall arc of the story, we didn't find until we were done and in the edit room, and that takes a long time to sort that out, and the cutting has to be so, so disciplined.

> "Storytelling is a skill that you can become better at through lots and lots of practice."

Eddie Hamilton: I'm really trying to become an expert in story and storytelling. Storytelling is so key to day-to-day human interaction and communication. I get an enormous kick out of books about storytelling and the history of storytelling and the different ways of storytelling.

Hullfish: You said that your second vocation is to learn more about story. What resources have you found for learning story?

Eddie Hamilton: I have read a lot of books on story, and currently there are two books that I recommend that everybody reads. One of them is so good that I wish I could keep it a secret and not tell anybody. The first is called The 21st Century Screenplay by Linda Aronson. It's a fantastic book about creative screenwriting and unlocking creative potential, but the trick with that book is the second half of it is a study of non-linear storytelling, and she's analyzed why certain non-linear film stories work and why some don't work as well. And I've found it incredibly useful as an editor to understand and grasp her rules of non-linear storytelling, and it has been hugely beneficial to me on several movies where I thought, "How can I re-structure this?"

and the lessons I learned from reading her book gave me great insight into what might be a good solution. So that's one book I'd recommend. The other book, which is really my favorite, favorite storytelling book at the moment, which I only read about last month, is called Into the Woods: A Five Act Journey Into Story by John Yorke. It is not a long book, but it is a brilliant book. So many light bulbs went off as I was reading it. There is also a third book, which is a massive storytelling bible, The Seven Basic Plots by Christopher Booker, which is a monumental life's work, where he has effectively read, watched, studied almost every play, novel, poem, song, opera, musical and film that's ever been written through the whole of history, then taken a step back and compiled everything he's learned and put it in a book. It's so important that we as editors understand that stuff because it's our bread and butter.

In our effort to wring every drop of story from a film, we have an arsenal of tools. One of the tools that delivers the most power in that pursuit is our invisible dance with the actors. Our stewardship of their performance is a sacred trust. The next chapter describes the ways that performance is discovered and sculpted to serve the story.

Chapter 6
Performance

As I mentioned in the Introduction, this book's genesis was in the generous mention of an editor by an actress at the Oscars. In the acceptance speech for Best Supporting Actress of the 86th Oscars in 2014, Lupita Nyong'o thanked "Joe Walker, the invisible performer in the editing room."

This was a moment of gratitude from an actress who realized that—while she supplied all of the source material for what movie audiences would see as her performance—much of the shaping and curating of her performance was part of an intimate, yet long-distance relationship with her editor.

"Intimate" may seem the wrong word for two people who may never meet and never work together side-by-side, but if you have ever edited an actor's performance, you realize that the only way to do a good job is to have a deep sense of empathy and connection with the performance of the actors. Throughout this chapter, you will hear editors speaking passionately about how attuned they are to the subtlest temperature variation, nuances and creative alterations in performance. Sometimes actors give almost identical performances throughout repeated takes of a scene. Sometimes wide differences exist between takes as the actor and director explore character and story.

> "The only way to do a good job is to have a deep connection with the actors."

In addition to simply finding the right performance for a particular story moment or segment of a character's arc, the editor also has the chance to mold and shape the actor's performance by altering pacing, emphasizing moments of character development by revealing, hiding and even constructing moments which emphasize an actor's strengths and hide his or her weaknesses. This is not to take away from the actor's importance as a storyteller; but only the editor is able to view and construct these performances in the context of the final story. That's why the context of the larger story sometimes changes an editor's perception of performance within a scene.

Hullfish: Joe, as I mentioned, this book really came about from that moment of Lupita calling you out at the Oscars.

Joe Walker, *12 Years a Slave*: She's amazing. I can't express how grateful I am to her. You work day in and day out with actors' performances, and it's a position of trust. But also, when you cut something like a swordfight or a fistfight, you end up with aching muscles at the end of the day because you can't help but empathize and experience their feelings and react with them. So I do feel like I'm in a kind of dance with the actors.

Hullfish: I am fascinated by the amount of the performance that is constructed by the editor. You are manipulating the performance of the actor much more than I think many people realize: protecting them from weaker performances, guiding the pacing and delivery of their lines and reactions to their fellow performers. Having the timing off by even a few frames creates a performance that doesn't ring true. You are a steward of the performance for the actor.

Joe Walker: I love the fact that we're in the middle of all of these things. We're in the middle of photographic choices, music and audio choices, story choices and performance. I love spending my life dancing with the actors. Just today we were picking apart a sequence where during the first assembly, it felt right for me to have this awestruck, breathy performance of a series of lines, but then today we were looking at it, and we figured we were completely over-doing it. It should be drier. We need to dry this performance out, and we went through the options and there were some earlier takes that were a much more dehydrated, scientific reading. It's great when you're working on a single camera shoot because you've got the range of available options in your memory. You might not know the exact timecode, but you do know that you've got a different performance to dig in to later if that feels like the right thing. Editing is not so much a vertical operation for me, about making a single edit or scene, it's about crafting all these things into a longer horizontal line to convey atmosphere and tension and help shape a fantastically moving performance against time. That's a constantly evolving pursuit.

Editing as Stewardship

Hullfish: What's clear from the Walker/Lupita story is the trust and care that the editor must have for the actors. How critical is it for you to act as a steward for the actor's performance?

Sidney Wolinsky, *The Sopranos*: That's the most important thing of all. I mean—well, maybe not of all, there are all kinds of things that are important—but the perfor-

mance in terms of that you want to believe that this actor is the character and not an actor acting is important. So that's what you look for. A sense of authenticity.

Hullfish: Tom, you had some great acting talent in Spotlight. Talk to me about being the steward of the performances.

Tom McArdle, Spotlight: It's interesting to see in the dailies how some actors are better in their early takes and others are better in later ones. For the most part, Tom (director, Tom McCarthy) and I have a similar taste in performances, so the takes that are in the rough cut generally don't have to be changed too much during the later editing, but there are always some adjustments that get made.

Stephen Mirrione, The Revenant: I think it's a sacred trust that I have with these actors. I definitely take that as seriously as I possibly can. If I don't respect that performance, that's just going to make them less and less likely to trust and feel good about being able to really go for it. When they feel like they're in a safe space to do something really crazy or really outlandish that leads to just a spectacular moment captured on film, the only way you get that is if everybody trusts everybody involved.

Clayton Condit, Voice from the Stone: Ultimately it's about emotion and empathy. The whole thing is a dance. It's about character, and "less is more" when it comes to performances. So it's really about finding and building moments that work together for the overall scene.

Finding the Performance

Hullfish: Talk to me about finding a performance in the dailies that has the right tone.

Julian Clarke, Deadpool: You can take a bad performance and make it passable, or sometimes the harder job is actually working with a really strong performance. With Ryan's (actor, Ryan Reynolds) material, he doesn't give you bad takes, but he gives you a lot of variety, so then it becomes a question of "What's the right choice here? Is it better to be funny, or is it better to be earnest here?" You have a whole bunch of choices, and you can be paralyzed with good options, and it comes down to deciding what really serves the scene and the story best.

Mike Hill, In the Heart of the Sea: To me, that's the number one responsibility of an editor. You can affect the performance in so many ways. I feel an obligation to the actor to get their very best moments in the film. I love the process of going through and finding all the great moments that an actor gives you and then building that scene. To me it's the ultimate part of the job. Russell Crowe, on Beautiful Mind, did multiple

takes where he would alter the character's behavior. In certain takes he'd be more manic, in certain takes he'd be more laid-back. It was pretty fascinating to watch his approach.

Hullfish: What draws you to a specific reading of a line?

Image 6.1 Steve Buscemi in HBO's Boardwalk Empire. Photo: Macall B. Polay / HBO.

> "I usually decide on an emotion that I'm trying to convey and then look for it."

Maryann Brandon, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: Sometimes there's a physicality to something the actors do that makes the way you cut a scene work. For instance, when Rey touches the light-saber in what we used to call the "Force Back." She comes out of this dream state, and she's running in the snow, and she sees Kylo Ren step out from behind a tree, and she had this great physical reaction on her face, which I used before the audience sees Kylo Ren. J. J. thought, "You should do that the other way." But I said, "No. There's a physicality to it that I read as 'scared' and then you see what she's afraid of." I usually decide on an emotion that I'm trying to convey and then look for it.

Hullfish: For me, it's always a matter of finding that moment where it feels honest, and that the emotion is closest to the story.

Maryann Brandon: Right. You can always tell when it's not working or they're not believing.

Hullfish: How are you choosing or rejecting performances, Dan?

Dan Zimmerman, Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials: I try to never let something technical get in the way of a good performance. A perfect example of this is in this little indie I'm cutting. One of the actors was telling a really bad joke but then kind of had to reset himself, and then he told it again. And I actually used that reset in the scene because it actually made the joke funnier. There's a fine line, because there's a clear intent on the part of the performance within the takes that you're given, and more often than not, you'll find out that the director is either searching for something in later takes, or if, as the takes progress in number, the actor "finds" the performance in the later takes, you can see that in the dailies. People constantly ask me, "How do you know what the best take is?" You can see by watching the dailies what the intent of the director is. Some directors will burn a take because he wants to get one moment. There are times when you can tell that he didn't really want the whole take, but just that one moment. You can make an actor who may not be strong in a scene just as strong as your lead actor just by playing his dialogue on your lead actor's face, who will give you the reaction to the feelings you're hearing and that powers the weaker actor. There's so many ways to make or break a scene as far as cutting performance, which is why I love the editing process so much; because not only are the options infinite, but you also get to put your stamp on it.

Performance that Tells the Story

Hullfish: Performance always has to be in service to story, right?

Dan Zimmerman: As an editor, you can fall victim to …

Hullfish: … Trying to have the most emotion!

Dan Zimmerman: Yes! Exactly.

Hullfish: "Give me the take with the most emotion!" Using the performance with the most emotion is not always the right storytelling idea, right?

Dan Zimmerman: That's exactly it. Sometimes you lose sight of the big picture because you're thinking, "Wow, that's an amazing scene!" But then you take a step back and you realize that it doesn't work. That's one of the reasons that as you start cutting individual scenes and you've finally got a run of scenes that cut together, you want to edit them into a little sequence because that's where you find out whether you went off the rails a little bit, and then you can correct yourself.

Hullfish: Jake, in Brooklyn, much of the performance that I remember is completely without words, including a great, lengthy shot of the lead actress just deciding on a

course of action.

Jake Roberts, Brooklyn: John and I had to fight quite hard to keep that shot the length that it is because it was not necessarily embraced by the financiers, who thought it was indulgent. Despite the pressure, we never cut it shorter. It was a scene that was shot on the third or fourth day, and I hadn't had any discussion with anyone, and the rushes came back, and I looked at them, and it was probably the first scene where Saoirse Ronan really had something to sink her teeth into, and I was amazed by how expressive she was. At the assembly stage, I thought, "I'm going to keep this really long." I don't know if John originally intended for that shot to go that long. Sometimes you roll very long on a take to find just the right short moment you want. But certainly we were both in total agreement once we watched a cut that it was doing so much work for us. It was keying the audience in at a very early stage to let them know that this is essentially what the movie was going to be about: concentrate on her face. The focus of the story isn't in what's going on around her. The focus is in her eyes—her expressiveness.

Shaping Performance

Hullfish: How much sculpting of performance do you do? Or do you find with such strong performers you don't really need to do that?

> "You want them to be consistent and understand where they are emotionally."

Andy Weisblum, Alice Through the Looking Glass: It doesn't matter who it is or how good they are … there is always sculpting because there's always the context. And the context is always changing. Whether it's the context of the whole movie or the context of scene or the context of somebody else's performance. Even if they've made strong choices and they executed them well, I'm dealing with the context of the scene itself. I'm trying to preserve those intensions the best I can or recognize when they're not working and adjust. I'm not sure what else there is to it, except that you want them to be consistent and trackable and understand where they are emotionally, even if it's comedy and the characters are not even that deep. Every character usually has some motivation in the scene, and you want to make sure that you highlight it.

Hullfish: I was thinking about the timing or the pacing. You know a lot of people think that it's the actor holding on this brilliant pause but … (Laughs)

Andy Weisblum: No it's not…

Hullfish: … so often it's the editor.

> "You can't just obey whatever they did in the moment."

Andy Weisblum: If we film for an hour with Sasha (actor, Sasha Baron Cohen) improvising, and then we film for an hour of Johnny (actor, Johnny Depp) improvising, and the scene goes six different directions, you have to adjust the timing of things back and forth. You can't just obey whatever they did in the moment. It's more complicated than that.

Hullfish: Adjusting temperatures of performance for example?

Andy Weisblum: Yeah, or something that's a little bit too broad or something's not strong enough or something just doesn't land and you have to try and figure out why. That's trial and error. More often you apply something that is great or funny in the dailies that has no place in the scene or doesn't work opposite of what you're dealing with. So you bang your head against the wall trying to build the scene around X, but X has no place in the scene. Then you have a problem. It just sits there and people say, "Why isn't this as funny as it was in the dailies?" And I say, "Because that's the dailies, and this is the scene." They're just two different contexts. Watching the person say the same lines over and over again and hitting their mark is not the same as what it means in the context of how somebody's reacting to it.

Anne Coates, Lawrence of Arabia: Some actors I've had other problems with. They've been way over the top—that's the very common thing—so you have to tone down their performances a little bit. If you've got really wonderful actors and they're all wonderful, you're very lucky. Very often you've got a weak actor, and you don't know you're going to be faced with that until you are. Then you have to cut round them or make their performance the best you can. One actress I was working with, I mostly picked out where she looked charming and smiled and cut away from her when she was talking. I would have her start a sentence, and then I'd immediately cut away from her onto the reaction or the dialogue of the other person. I love to cut with actors' eyes and what I see behind what they're thinking and saying. It's fun to tell stories with the actors.

> "Record your initial, honest response to a performance."

Job Ter Burg, Elle: Some actors will only do subtle variations, and others may give you nine or more completely different varieties of a performance—and you have to select from those, based on what you feel the scene or the character's arc requires. Isabelle Huppert was amazing. She had so much control over how she was portraying that character. Basically, every scene was driven by her performance. In a certain way, that made my job much easier. In essence, though, a film actor only needs to hit the perfect performance once, and then we can make it work. It's about finding those very best moments. And I find we editors do that from the gut, you need a certain sensitivity for that. And that starts the very first moment you go watch the footage. You need to record your initial, honest response to a performance.

Image 6.2 Director Paul Verhoeven directs Isabelle Huppert in Elle. © 2015 Guy Ferrandis / SBS Productions.

Brent White, Ghostbusters: One of the things that a lot of these directors do is cross-shoot with two different cameras, and that helps me manufacture the performance, because I can adjust the rhythm of the speech and the rhythm of the way people talk so that I can create a funny rhythm that will make you laugh at the end when it happens in the correct way. I can fine tune those rhythms and go, "That's a little close, but it's not quite right, and what if there was more air there? And there's this thing I call "The Apatow Pause," which is like, "How long can I hold a pause … … … until it breaks?" And sometimes the more awkward it is and the longer it is, it becomes this thing where you create a certain amount of tension. And when the tension breaks, you get a bigger laugh and a stronger laugh, and there's a physical thing that happens when you create the perfect little rhythm and pause. Judd's a great technician in knowing what rhythm is going to make something funny. "Is it six frames? Is it eight frames?" And that's how you spend your day: manipulating the footage so that it plays in a certain rhythm and a certain way.

Hullfish: Timing is also really an interesting part of performance. The smallest changes in the speed it takes to respond to another person reveal a lot.

Dan Hanley, In the Heart of the Sea: Depending on what those characters are conveying in any given scene, that determines the pace of the movie. Any given movie script has a pace that's right for that film.

Hullfish: You don't have to be an editor for some of this. We're all human beings and attuned to the rhythms of speech. Just the slightest hesitation or replying too early is enough to make a performance sound false.

Mike Hill: Yup. Absolutely. I've often found that sometimes it's better to look for those moments where they're not doing everything perfectly. Where they stumble a little bit, and it makes it seem real. Sometimes it gets too perfect. If they snap into everything so perfectly, it just doesn't feel like real life.

> "I believe there's a certain natural quality and rhythm to cutting performance."

Steven Mirkovich, Risen: My approach to editing dialogue is to give actors every opportunity to drive home what they're trying to sell in a scene. However, I don't necessarily believe in staying on one person because their performance is so good that we can't cut away from them. That's not my kind of editing. It's not an actor's showcase reel. When I edit, I'm part of the audience. As part of the audience, I want to move around in a scene, not sit on a performance for the sake of it. I believe there's a certain natural quality and rhythm to cutting performance. If a character says something that's dynamic and gets some kind of emotion or reaction from the person they're talking with, it's simple, that's where I want to go. I try to weed out the redundancies in performances.

Hullfish: How much are you able to influence performances just by the timing of the delivery of lines, or are you trying to be fairly faithful to the actors?

Lee Smith, Spectre: That's a fairly easy question. If they're a bad actor or a very ordinary actor, you can improve it tremendously through editing. If they're a top-of-their-game actor, just don't cock it up. It's like cutting a diamond. There are certain actors where you could basically cut their stuff blind-folded, and you'd have to really go out of your way to make it crap. Some actors are chameleons and will throw out the odd take. I've worked with actors who will give you a performance that's not really even the character, but it's part of their process.

Kate Sanford, Vinyl: I find that there were very few actors who needed a great deal of help. Steve Buscemi knew who his character was. He certainly didn't need any help. The only help that he needed was pacing because his lines were often delivered quite slowly. And we did get notes on Boardwalk Empire that they wanted to go faster. I also find that when you cut somebody faster, they seem smarter. So, with his character in particular, we did try to have him respond a little bit quicker, be a little faster, so that he seemed like he was always the smartest guy in the room. For performance, I really take my cue from these tremendous actors. I worked on Show Me a Hero before Vinyl, and Oscar Isaac never had a false note. The only thing that we were doing was controlling the timing and pacing of his scenes. That being said, there have certainly been actors in projects over the years where I've had challenges, and I often find that cutting down their scenes and lines helps a great deal. With some actors, less is more.

> "If you just put two things together and split it the right way, you get this intense burst of energy."

Jeffrey Ford, Captain America: Civil War: I think it's also a little bit like atomic physics. You can start an atomic chain reaction that can release an enormous amount of energy from just a simple combination of elements; if you just put two things together and split it the right way, you get this intense burst of energy. Those two things separately don't have any effect, but it's putting them together at the right moment, at the right temperature, and you have this blast. Once it happens, it just feels right, and you can try to modulate it, but there's so many fractal elements of acting and lighting and sound and music … You're doing your best, but in some ways you're trying to find something that's there, but it's not really there. You're creating something in the combination. It always amazes me how delicate movies are. It's one of the reasons I've kept doing this and why I love to see films, and it's impossibly exciting to me because they are something more than the sum of their parts when you put them together … it's magic.

Editing Bracketed Performance

Hullfish: Performance is so critical to comedy, and Jan, you work with a directorial team that does something very interesting on set that then requires special attention in editing.

Jan Kovac, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: Obviously this kind of war comedy, the kind that's rooted in realism, is going to have a lot of tonal shifts. And the guys love to work with tonal shifts. I don't know if you've seen Focus, Crazy Stupid Love or I Love You Phillip Morris, but their work tends to be a little darker or have more emotional beats, and for that they shoot with a method Spike Jonze uses. They bracket the performances very wide so they can go from comic to really serious in the cutting room later and shape the story and the emotional beats the way they want.

Hullfish: Explain to me a little bit about that bracketing process.

Jan Kovac: You get the actors to do lighter takes, and you get them to do a darker or more emotional version of the same scene and everything in between. You don't want to get stuck in the cutting room with just one way to edit the scene.

Hullfish: How much do you feel you're shaping the performance in editing, and how much are you being the steward of the performance, or does it depend on the scene?

Jan Kovac: It depends on what happens in the take. Sometimes you want to just stay the f—out of actors' way and keep what they did, and sometimes you need to create something that did not exist before. So they are both important. I think it's more important to understand when to stay away from ruining a performance.

Hullfish: Glenn, as the director, can you expand on the use of these bracketed performances?

Glenn Ficarra, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: Because all of the movies we've done have been these mixed-tone movies, they're kind of made in the editing room as far as shading the performances and the arc—where a movie might start funny and get more serious as it goes along. That requires us to have more control over the performances, and the actors really like it because they'll do a comic version of a scene and serious version of the scene without changing the script much. It gives you lots of choices later on—sometimes too many.

Hullfish: What are the practicalities or realities of "bracketing performances" on set? How are you directing people? Or do you start with the comic version first and then go serious or vice versa? And how many shades are you trying in between?

Glenn Ficarra: It's just a couple. Usually the scene is what the scene is. When we're in certain parts of the movie when we're unclear how serious they need to be or how comic they need to be, those are the places where we'll get the choices. It's not every scene. You're usually talking about hitting the intention of the scene as read and then "Oh, if we want a laugh here we could always do this …" Then we throw in a joke or

an improv. It's not much different than working with actors and doing a scripted version, and then we'll improv. We'll do a couple of improvs and see what happens, and you follow along with coverage. It's not necessarily one way or another, but if a scene was written as more dramatic, that's what we do first and then add stuff to it.

Using Audio from Different Takes than Picture

Hullfish: One of the secrets that the audience hopefully never realizes is that the words that the actor speaks in a take might be from a different performance than the one they're watching on camera. I know I've often found a great visual take, but the audio performance is flat or maybe mushy.

Tom McArdle: In situations where someone's a little flat on the end of a line or maybe dialogue got slurred somewhere in the middle of a line, and so forth, I'll cut in new sound for part of a line from another take, and sync it up using the waveforms. There's a fair amount of dialogue replacement that happens in scenes.

Mary Jo Markey: I also spend a lot of time building line readings that work better for me. The readings have a greater intent than the take that has the perfect look or the perfect eyes, but the reading isn't quite what I was looking for so I'll swap out the reading. I do a lot of that. Also, I find stillness to be a lot more convincing than a lot of gesturing.

Split Screen: The Invisible Weapon

Hullfish: The other secret weapon that many people don't realize is that when you're looking at two people in a scene together, that's not always just a simple, single take. More times than people realize, a wide shot or two shot or even an over-the-shoulder shot is actually a split screen of multiple takes or revised timings within the frame. The performance is being shaped without the audiences even seeing it.

Jan Kovac: It can be as simple as what happened in one scene, where the head of the network is talking to Tina as she's walking into the shot, but in the best take for the actor sitting behind the desk, Tina was already standing in the shot. So we split it and had her walk in from a different take. That's a very simple case. Then there are more complicated examples that are more performance driven, not just technical or timing.

Hullfish: I taught an editing class at an Editor's Retreat years ago where I gave everyone four or five camera setups and takes of Gary Sinise performing a scene from Streetcar Named Desire. All of the editors cut the scene before the class and then we all watched each other's cut. It was very informative to see 20 really good editors cut

the same scene. But I remember one guy, his timeline was filled with special effects—this was on Avid—and you could see the effects icons on why this guy would have all these effects on a simple dramatic scene. It turned out that he was splitting the performances to get the best performances and to enable him to make better continuity edits on either end of the wide shots. It worked great.

FluidMorph: An Avid term for an edit point that is hidden by morphing the frames on either side of the cut into a seamless, invisible edit. Premiere has a similar feature called MorphCut.

OpticalFlow: An FCP-X term for altering the speed of footage—slowing it down or speeding it up. Avid calls this Timewarp. Twixtor also has a version of this.

Jan Kovac: It's a great help. All the pull-ups you can do and **FluidMorphs** or **OpticalFlow** tricks. Those are amazing because there are a lot of pauses, and you have to pick up the pace a lot of times, and you don't want to do it just with cutting. The hard thing with splits in this movie was that it was all hand-held, so you had to track both sides, and it was harder to match.

Image 6.3 Scene from HBO's critically acclaimed show The Wire, edited by Kate Sanford, ACE, with actors Michael B. Jordan (Wallace); Tray Chaney (Malik "Poot" Carr); Larry Gilliard, Jr. (D'Angelo Barksdale); J.D Williams (Preston "Bodie" Broadus). Photo: David Lee / HBO.

Over: when used as a word to describe a type of shot, "an over" is short for "over-the-shoulder."

Hullfish: Kate, do you ever split screen if you're trying to tighten a performance on a two shot or "**over**"?

Kate Sanford: I don't know about a two shot but certainly over-the-shoulder. Over-the-shoulder splits: I'm sure there are one or two in every single episode, and I think that's just become standard practice at this point. But actually, I know other editors who do very detailed time warps within their shots to get rid of little pauses and stuff like that. I would say sometimes there are some secret joins in some of Marty's (Martin Scorsese) pilot shots that we've seen.

Dylan Highsmith, Star Trek Beyond: We definitely did that on Star Trek when we have a wide where we really love one take from one actor and another take from another actor. We split screen them together. That's the best way to preserve a beat without having to cut it up and I think it's a really great tool to maintain performance with ensembles.

Brent White: Yeah. I do that too. I'm sure, especially with an action movie like Star Trek, it helps you create the dynamic and tension you're trying to achieve. I can see that. I do that because there's a look that maybe comes a little bit late or you're trying to get a reaction in a wide shot to happen closer to the joke, and you put in a split screen and pull it up a bit.

Kirk Baxter, Gone Girl: If you've got two actors on screen at the same time, I'm almost always doing a split screen and re-timing their actions or choosing different takes between the people. And then the effects team in-house sort of seamlessly joins it back together again. So that stuff is always taking place in the background. I find that where your eyes mostly focus, I'll time it around that person and then the person that's on the over-the-shoulder, I'll be speeding up in between with little 50% speed-ups, so that their reactions are twice as fast. I find that when two actors are talking through, when you take that normal pacing and drop it into a nearly finished film, it's way too slow, 9 out of 10 times. You have to kind of pep it up to meet the pacing of the entire scene.

Hullfish: So let's talk about that. Obviously, the other way to pace up that scene is to just cut from wide to close to close …

Kirk Baxter: But if you're in a situation where you're cutting for every single line, you can end up looking a little "TV." Well, TV is pretty f—ing good these days. I look for opportunities to not have to cut for every line. So if I can play out two or three lines on one shot, then I'll do so. But I usually have to use those tricks of splitting the screen to be able to do it.

Performance Needs Context

Tom Cross, Whiplash: Film editing can be challenging because your target is often a moving one. When you start cutting, you're working on scenes. You choose certain takes or pieces that you feel serve the desired story points and emotions. Once you start looking at the broader picture, when everything is assembled together, you might switch out performances because the context has illuminated a piece or moment that feels out of place.

Steven Sprung, Star Trek Beyond: Often, you don't know right away what the exact tone of a scene is going to be until you start working on it. And that will always change once we go ahead and put the whole movie together, and we start to see how the scene is playing in context. When first assembling a scene, I may feel very passionately that a performance has to be a particular way. And of course, as often as not, that ends up changing. The soft spoken take is the best one, not the intense one, or whatever. But that's just the process.

> "The editor can modulate that performance better than the actor because the editor sees the context."

Image 6.4 Left to right: Jack Hollington, William Houston, and Dakota Fanning in the movie Brimstone. Photo by Philippe Antonello. Courtesy of N279 Entertainment

Hullfish: Your sensibilities change, not just because you have a fresh perspective on a take, but because once the movie goes together in its complete form, you also see the way the character's supposed to change over time, and if you used a great, super-emotional take in a scene, later on you see that the character needs to build to that point.

Dan Hanley: Exactly. Exactly. And a great example of that is Beautiful Mind. Between Russell (actor, Russell Crowe) and Paul (actor, Paul Bettany) and Jennifer (actor, Jennifer Connelly), that arc of that performance—watching how far Russell could go or not go and how early could that be versus the end of the movie. That is a perfect example of that.

Hullfish: The editor had to be the one to modulate that performance because the actor is shooting scenes out of order and doesn't know what scenes might get cut or rearranged, and they're counting on you. Do you find those choices in performance evolve?

Julian Clarke: Absolutely. There were a lot of cases where something could be hilarious but then you watch in context and you think, "That's a little too much." The whole appeal of the character, Deadpool, is how crazy and digressive he was. So it was about being true to the character without having it derail the larger goal of watching the whole cut.

John Refoua, Southpaw: Sometimes you want to change the character arc because it's more interesting a certain way. In Southpaw, we had to do that quite a bit. Sometimes it's just to compress time, but also some other things come up as you're cutting a movie and telling stories. You say, "It would be great if he had a moment here and thought about this or that." So those are the kinds of things we talk about. Would it be good if we could manufacture a moment where he thinks this or that? Antoine would say, "I know I shot the scene this way, but I think it would be great if we could make it so that this happens."

On behalf of all of the editors in this book, I dedicate this chapter to Lupita Nyong'o and all of the other actors that we serve and who collaborate with us as surely as they do with the director and their fellow actors.

The next two chapters detail the importance of two other important tools in the editor's toolbox: sound design and music.

Chapter 7
Sound Design

It's been said that sound is half the movie. This chapter is dedicated to that idea.

Sound design is a serious secret weapon in selling your visual cuts. It can hide or even motivate a cut. It's also another weapon in delivering pacing and rhythm to an edit. Finally, sound is also capable of delivering believability and life to the environment surrounding the story, providing the subliminal clues that make an audience feel like they're in a real place, immersed in the story in a way that the picture alone can't do.

While some editors will cut and even screen without using music, there has been unanimous agreement among the editors I've interviewed that spending time constructing a strong sound bed of effects, atmospheres and audio ambience (to say nothing of dialogue) is critical in delivering a film that will pass muster with the director and preliminary audiences. It's also a solid aural foundation that the sound team can build on when delivering the final sound design and mix.

For bigger films, the editor may focus more on picture, knowing that just keeping up with the volume of visual decisions will be daunting and knowing that there is a budget for the sound team to deliver sound design and elements throughout the editing process, but there's still the need for the editor to collaborate and provide guidance to that team.

Sound to Sell Visual Edits

Hullfish: Leo, what's the importance of sound editing and sound design in helping to sell the visual cuts and in keeping the audience in the story?

Leo Trombetta, Mad Men: I was a sound editor for a number of years and can't underestimate the importance of sound in creating an environment or even allowing you to disguise some

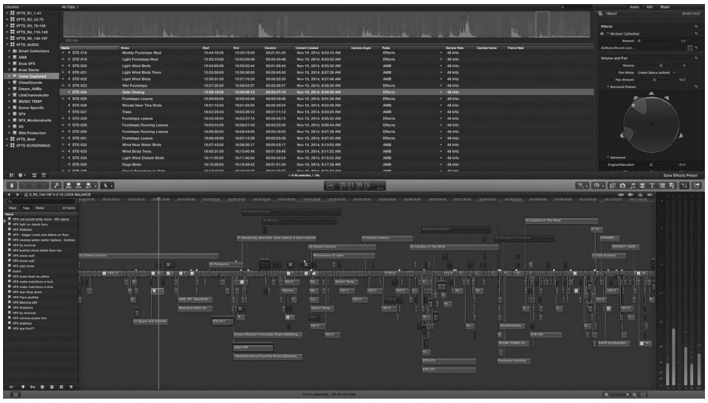


Image 7.1 Whiskey Tango Foxtrot audio sequence timeline. A screenshot from FCP-X. Courtesy of Jan Kovac.

outrageously bold cuts that would be jarring without it. Try watching Goodfellas with the sound muted, and you'll see what I mean.

Hullfish: Jan, how much does the sound design influence the picture cut?

Jan Kovac, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: It definitely affects the tempo, rhythm and pacing of your cutting. It's important for John and Glenn (the directors) to be as close to being done from the get-go. I try to present to them the "final" look and the "final" sound from the first cut. You don't want them to jump through hoops to feel whether the scene is good or not or what needs to be changed. So it's better to put extra work in to get yourself there and get the directors there. You're trying to make it as easy on them as possible to stay in the scene.

> "Build up moments and transitions with sound as a key player."

David Brenner, Batman v Superman: I agree that it's super-important. If you start to get into sound design early on, it becomes part of the cut. You build up moments and transitions with sound as a key player. For instance, in Batman v Superman, there's the moment in the beginning of the film where Wayne Tower falls down. Bruce Wayne runs into the cloud of dust, which fills the screen, and then we dissolve to another completely white frame, which is a time cut, dust again starts to dissipate, and then we reveal Bruce walking in a daze. A riderless horse walks by, eerie, followed by a few dazed survivors. Sonically, we found a musical crescendo that climaxes when the cloud of dust hits Bruce, accompanied by a very round and boomy impact, which rings out … leaving nothing at all save a high-pitched, tinnitus sound. Everything else is a vacuum. Then, we slowly brought back some elements: the sound of the horse's breath, its hooves. Then I found an eerie Tibetan Horn, actually a human thigh bone being blown, that is heard in the distance, only with a little growing wind.

And then as the camera gets closer to Bruce, we slowly bring back reality sounds, creaks and groans, and finally the production track of someone shouting "Mr. Wayne! Mr. Wayne!," which turns out to be Wallace Keefe trapped beneath the rubble. This motivates Bruce to react, and as he leaves the frame, the energy picks up with reality sounds and music with tension and pulsing rhythm. So this shape, which involves picture, sound design and music, began with our first cut and remains in the final cut pretty much the same way.

Another good reason to consider sound design and music early on has to do with extended action scenes. As you get deep into the last act of a long film like this, you have to do everything you can to avoid bombarding the audience and shutting them down before the film's over. A good trick is to pick a point late in the 3rd act to let the sound effects play underneath strong melodic score. The sequence will seem different now, fresh. We created a montage-y action beat late into the sequence, where Superman and Wonder Woman are fighting Doomsday. The style of this lent to a mix where hard sound effects went into the background, with reverb, as well as the war cries of Wonder Woman.

Hullfish: What's the place for sound effects when you're dealing with so much previs and temporary visual effects on a picture like Jungle Book?

> "Sound design in the edit is critical."

Mark Livolsi, The Jungle Book: I think that the sound design plays a larger than normal role early on, when you're trying to make up for imagery that is so rough and rudimentary that you really have a hard time understanding it without augmentation.

Lee Smith, Spectre: Sound design in the edit is critical. If you're talking sound design and sound effects, I will use my SFX library the whole time I'm cutting. A lot of the time actors will be miming gunshots, or you'll have an intimate scene and you can hear a generator going. I need to kill that distraction as quickly as possible so it's easier to see what the scene is about.

Steven Sprung, Star Trek Beyond: It's great to have those sounds in early. Without them, it's harder to judge how things are working.

Dylan Highsmith, Star Trek Beyond: Temp-wise we try to fill up our tracks as soon as possible. On Star Trek Beyond we're lucky because we're coming into a franchise that's had two films in it already, so we got the stems from all that. For the first big

action sequences, you can cut with those stems. TrekCore.com actually has a ridiculous amount of legacy sounds. We got all those into the Avid to cut with, just for temp stuff. So, you can kind of hear and get that flavor that is Star Trek.

Hullfish: Sound design in some of these big action films seems obvious, but what about in a love story?

> "Foley can help make the viewer 'lean in.'"

Clayton Condit, Voice from the Stone: Ambiences, music, transitions, off-camera story elements, The Voice, you name it. We worked with EJ Holowicki, our supervising sound designer at Skywalker, to design The Voice, and we were even as specific as to give each room sort of its own ambient character, or maybe there was a storm brewing to add some tension. We used a Rachmaninoff cue as a theme and manipulated parts of that song for transitions or to bring a specific character into a scene. All that stuff adds up and helps to tell the story and make it all more cinematic. Foley nuances can help make the viewer "lean in." Maybe you're not quite sure if you heard something or not. And being able to position those details in surround space, instead of just between a pair speakers, completely helps you sell your edit and what you're imagining will happen once you go to full sound design and final mix.

The aural space you are in has a character, and playing with that just makes it all the more believable. One location for our film was a quarry where we layered detailed sound elements of a waterfall with lapping water and winds and really created a space. Or the sound of the courtyard of this old stone castle or the tomb. That's the fun stuff. I remember Eric and I struggled to make a particular scene work. We had a cat concept, the cat didn't work and ultimately the film didn't need the cat. Instead of the cat hissing, we needed something else to motivate our actress to go into a room. We found another sound that fit the storyline, but it wasn't working. We tried positioning it in time with different reactions from the actress, but it just wasn't feeling right. I EQ'd it a little and panned it left, and all of a sudden it worked. All it needed was to be in the mix right and sound real so you believed it. So now you can lock picture confidently. I try to show very refined cuts so I do a lot of sound work before I present. Sound really is half the picture, and you've got to have it in there to sell the edit. You don't want anything to pull you out.

Hullfish: How much do the sound effects and sound design inform your editing, Job, or how much does that help sell your visual cuts?

Job Ter Burg, Elle: I'll add some room atmospheres and sound effects, even before opening up the production sound and dialogue. If the scene is really noisy, I'll try and clean it up, manually, or with something like iZotope RX if needed. I tend to go further and further in how much I treat the sound already because I really like to watch a scene with the sound as good as I can possibly get it. And that helps for screenings too, of course. So there'll often be a low-cut EQ filter and a mild compressor on the **RTAS** inserts of my dialogue tracks, in order to smooth them out. I mean, it's not a perfect mix, but it's a pretty nice way to get things balanced and together so that it's easier to watch the scene without being distracted by the sound.

I am kind of anal about it. I find it so hard to watch a scene with raw sound. It's going to be so jarring if you hear any sound cut or if things are unbalanced or one person is speaking too loud or whatever. I have my audio monitoring in my room calibrated, so I can always work at a standard level. It enables me to take my cuts to a screening room at any point in time without having to do a mix pass—or having to reach for the volume knob all the time.

RTAS: stands for Real Time AudioSuite. These are audio special effects filters that can be applied through the channel inserts on the mixer in Avid and ProTools.

"I prefer to have a center speaker. It helps tie the sound to the screen."

And I cut in 5.1—or mostly LCR (left-center-right), but sometimes I can't help myself and play with the surrounds a bit. I prefer to have a center speaker; it helps tie the sound to the screen, especially for dialogue, of course. And it's the way things will sound when played back in a screening room, so working with just a left and right speaker doesn't cut it.

Conrad Buff, The Huntsman: Winter's War: With sound design particularly, there may be key sound effects that impact timing, so the placement of those, the character of those, are important to me. Sometimes background, just a simple background, is important to me but not always. I'm always interested in applying effects.

Hullfish: Brent, there's some great sound in Ghostbusters. Do you find that the sound is critical to selling your visual edits?

Brent White, Ghostbusters: Super critical. We're always protecting the laugh. We're always protecting the joke. We bring the sound guys in really early, and we work with them throughout the preview process, and it is a way that we can create the movie together so that when we get on the final dub stage, we're not trying a bunch of new things that we've never seen before. We're just fine-tuning the things that we've worked on for the last three months as we've been going through these test screenings. They do a temp dub for every one of those. The sound guys are integral in the process of finding the movie: this is the right car sound or this is the right gun blast or all those kinds of things so that we find them early enough, and we're not filling up the movie at the last moment with things that aren't tested or we're not sure of, and that way we can protect the jokes and ideas. One of the things about Ghostbusters is that there was so much tech and so much opportunity to do this great sound job! You've got the ghosts and the city and the gear and the proton guns and how specific and precise they can be, and it was really a dance to get those things to work the way we wanted them to so that they are exciting, but they don't get in the way of the joke, and they don't get in the way of the emotion.

Hullfish: Jake, I noticed in Brooklyn that the audience was helped along in understanding some of the time jumps with sound design.

Jake Roberts, Brooklyn: All of the sound is generated by Glen Freemantle (sound designer) and his team. I can't take credit for the sound that was ultimately used, but the general conceit was usually something we created in the edit. I love sound design. I try and do as much of it as I can, even at a really early stage. I have a big sound effects library, and even on the first day of a rough cut, I will start playing around with atmospheres and effects.

> "Backgrounds help to smooth out the cuts."

Hullfish: How much sound design were you doing early on, Mike, to be able to make these scenes feel right, or do you let an assistant or the sound design team do that?

Mike Hill, In the Heart of the Sea: I like to do it myself if I have the time, and I like to do it fairly quickly after I get the sequence together, especially if it's a scene that needs that kind of help. Usually action scenes more than others. I like to fill in the backgrounds, which helps to smooth out the cuts, and then add some specific sound effect moments. If it's a big, huge sequence and I don't have much time to play with it, I'll ask one of the assistants to help out with that, but I think it's important to show

it to Ron (director, Ron Howard) or to any producers with as much of that in there as possible.

Kate Sanford, Vinyl: If you don't get your scene smoothed out—if you don't get it to play properly with sound—I don't think it's going to communicate. There's an expectation that the appropriate sounds will be there. Honestly, if you hear (room) tones bumping or cutting out, they're going to get thrown. So, you absolutely do not want to deliver a scene or present it until it's up to that standard. When I work for David Simon, the standards are two or three times higher than that because his work is based almost exclusively on sound design and not on music. So, there's often diegetic music. There's music in a bar or music playing in a car or something like that, but there's almost never score. For instance, in Show Me A Hero, (HBO) the crowd was a character in that mini series, and we had to put as much layering and as much screaming and get it to be as loud and as crazy and specific as we could before David would feel that the scene was going to work.

> "Sound design at the end of the scene dictates the pacing and rhythm going into the next scene."

Hullfish: Billy, on Straight Outta Compton, I loved the sound design at the beginning of the movie. How and why was that sound used?

Billy Fox, Straight Outta Compton: Sound is as equally important to me as the picture editing. I spend an incredible amount of time and use a lot of tracks to support that, and I believe in as polished and finished audio as the perfect edit. It is part of the edit. I'll build the bed and rough out some specific stuff, and then I'll go back into picture editing, and I do that back and forth a number of times so they kind of meet together at a completion. So much of it is the timing and the pacing—and whatever sound designs may happen at the end of the scene dictate the pacing and rhythm going into the next scene. Because so much of the selling of the movie—to the director or the producers, then to the studio or network—is their approval. I want them to see something that's as polished as possible. So sound is a hugely important factor in my editing.

Selling the Environment

Hullfish: Jake, on Brooklyn, one of the things I noticed was the sound design on the ship, as soon as she boards the ship to go to Ireland. The noise, the voices, the frightening difference between her pastoral, serene life in Ireland and this new reality. It assaulted you in a way.

Jake Roberts: Definitely that was meant to be the effect. It should sound scary and foreboding but also as large as it could be, because we were leaning on sound design to give us the scale we were lacking visually on the boat, due to budgetary reasons. The ship was just three sets of walls built in a studio in Dublin. So the more weight you can give it, the more you feel she's really on a voyage, the more the audience believes the world she's in. The voices, which populate the ship, also add to her intimidation and help imply a sense of scale that isn't otherwise there. Those voices were recorded later, after shooting the scene, in a recording studio.

> "We were leaning on sound design to give us the scale we were lacking visually."

Hullfish: Mark, at the beginning of Gravity, there are titles that explain that sound doesn't travel in outer-space. Sometimes it was very apparent that huge explosion and impacts were happening with no sound effects, and other times, there were sound effects. How much sound design do you try to emulate in the editing process before it got to the audio design team?

Mark Sanger, Gravity: I populated the track with a lot of abstract, subliminal sound. At this stage, it was enough that things in the room reverberated during playback without the specifics of sound design. This temp design was very layered and organic without being complex. It served the purpose of setting a tone but was gradually stripped out once Glenn (Glenn Freemantle, Sound Designer and Supervising Sound Editor) and his team began.

Tom McArdle, Spotlight: I like to do a full eight-track mix on the Avid—sound effects, backgrounds, tone, temp score, etc. I really want the soundtrack to not have any holes and to have the right feel because we have all these little screenings in the edit room throughout the editing process. Also, sometimes certain sounds will carry you through part of a scene, and you realize you don't have to rely on score as often.

Hullfish: Steven, you talked a lot about music. Can you talk about how you work with ambiences and sound effects beds?

> "Sometimes silence is better than sound to sell your point … there is a sound to silence."

Steven Mirkovich, Risen: I work a lot with backgrounds, ambience sounds and discrete effects. Whether it's a rattling doorknob or a creaky floor, you need the right sounds to sell an idea or thought. Sometimes silence is better than sound to sell your point … there is a sound to silence. We use winds, drones and tones. Adding tonal accents can put just the right polish on a scene. From the start, I'm usually very involved in sound selections and direction when we turn over the picture to our sound effects team. I make myself available so that as they're culling backgrounds and sound effects, I'll go over and sit with them, and we'll weed through choices. I'll have a fair amount of input in what we will or won't use. I go to a mixing stage with a fairly heavy hand. I need to have a strong overview of the "big picture" and don't feel there's anybody better qualified to make mixing calls than myself and the director.

Eddie Hamilton, Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation: I'm always working with no music or sound effects. I'm imagining everything, and then later I slowly build up a fairly detailed soundscape of atmospheres and sound effects and vocalization and dialogue, and then I'll build the music and start to feel it and continuously refine, allowing all those different elements to feed into the story. Quite often, when the sound goes on, the scene can get even tighter because the sound does some of the storytelling for you.

Joe Walker, Sicario: In terms of sound design, I think a really good sequence to talk about is the night vision sequence in Sicario. It almost sounds like it has a musical soundtrack, but actually it doesn't, not until the last possible moment. There's music in the lead-up to the scene where all the forces are amassing together for the finale. They're all on the hillside, and they put on their visors. The music stops, and they walk down the hill into darkness. It's all very carefully choreographed. We spent hours in the edit recording my assistant in the next room on a walkie-talkie, using a ZOOM recorder, just coming up with improvised dialogue. The idea was to use dialogue almost as a sound effect. We always had a sense of this external operation, which can be very chilling when you've got a shot of Benicio (actor, Benicio Del Toro, playing Alejandro) disappearing into the house, and the drone pilot is saying, "We're going blind." It's got this sinister connotation that "as much as we CAN'T see what you're about to do, we don't WANT to see what you're about to do."

To help with the sound design, buried in the seventh channel on one piece of sync, I found this incredible whistling noise where the signal from the wireless lav mic wasn't being received properly. We called it the guitar solo because it was this high, whining atonal melody as they're walking down the hill, which emphasized the imperfection of their communication in the dark. Alan Murray's team really brought some wonderful extra colors into that, so it just kept building and building, and you sort of don't even realize that there's no music in that sequence. It's very tense, and it's all to do with hard, sudden cuts that they think they see somebody in the background and a gun is lifted very quickly. It's got interestingly uneven pacing … at least I think so.

And with the walkie-talkie, you get great distortion, which adds a level of panic. I have a memory of the original Alien movie that one of the really tense things when they explore the planet and discover these egg shapes, one of the things that really induces fear is that you can't hear or see well. You can barely hear the crackly voices over the headsets, and the video feed of what they're seeing is indistinct. It adds a horrible vulnerability that they're out there and hard to reach, without clear lines of communication.

> "I spend a lot of time patiently chamfering the sound in and out."

The other thing I do is control—using audio keyframes—all of the ins and outs on every single piece of sound—faded in, faded out and checkerboarded. My ear is quite sharp, and I find things bumping in and out too distracting, and I can't stand it. So I spend a lot of time patiently chamfering the sound in and out and getting the levels all comparatively working. All that effort pays off three months later when you're able to mix it in a weekend.

Sound-wise, Sicario was really a successful combination of ideas that were set in motion in the cutting room, but brought to fruition by Alan Murray and his team. That's the kind of happy place for me where you present the sound team with something that's kind of working, and they can enhance it and challenge it with new ideas and better ideas. Alan Murray and his team are heroes of sound. I love his gunshots and his grimy car sounds, like when they're driving through Juarez.

Steve, you mentioned the sound of the bumps as the SUVs drive over things in the road: the sound that he recorded for those was absolutely superb. It was a really great collaboration. It starts by thinking of sound when you're cutting and … it's a funny

process on Sicario of trying not to think of sound and gradually bringing up the layers.

> "Sound is so important in informing point of view."

Stephen Mirrione, The Revenant: I do a lot of sound work while I'm working through the cut, mainly because sound is so important in informing point of view. Sometimes it's giving notes to the assistant editors, then at another point it is starting a conversation with the sound designers and getting them to fill out more layers, give more depth to the sound. The basic blueprint for the sound has to be complete though, in order to really get feedback from screenings early on. The more things that an audience has to imagine, the more likely they will imagine it wrong, and then you don't know if what you are trying to do is working.

Hullfish: David, do you use sound to provide clues or feeling about the environment?

David Wu, Hard Boiled: Oh yes, yes, yes. Definitely. Sound design is really how you serve the movie, how you serve the story. If you are cutting a documentary, you really need to put in sound effects that make you feel you're living in the environment … you're living in the whole world. If you're in a rural country, probably you can hear (imitates dog barking) or (imitates rooster crowing) in the countryside. You enhance it to feel that environment. But in a drama or sci-fi, sometimes you amplify, you exaggerate, you lead the audience to another scope.

I treat sound effects as music. Especially wind. I think in my library I have more than 50 kinds of wind. Very musical, very lyrical. My next favorite sound effect is footsteps. From a footstep, you can tell the story. You can tell if it's a lady or it's a guy. Big guy. Or from the footsteps, you can tell this guy is rushing or he's strolling, or with two footsteps, you can hear them kind of romancing. Or he's being chased or he is escaping, you know?

I love the process of building sound effects and music. Just a tiny bit of sound or even a neighbor's dog barking gives you the environment. You don't have to give a shot of a sunrise with the same guy sitting in his sofa falling asleep. Then you hard cut to day with the same lighting but you have a morning bird or rooster, the sound effect tells you it's the next morning. The sound effects tell the story, which is precious.

Hullfish: That idea of the dog barking, it's a good warning sign sometimes, or it's a way to tell the audience …

David Wu: … Something's coming or something's wrong, or even the very anxious dog bark (imitates barking), and they know, "Shit! Somebody's coming!" Because a lot of storytellers or directors now, they tend to telegraph, they tell the story too much. They hit you on the head. Too much on the nose.

But when you overdo sound effects sometimes it kills the scene. That's why sometimes I say less is more.

Collaboration with Sound Team and Assistants

Hullfish: David, how are you either collaborating with or directing an assistant or the sound department in delivering sound design for you?

David Brenner: Warren and I have been working together for a long time, so we have a shorthand. He has a good idea of what I'd put on a scene the first time. But before sound effects, you need a strong production backbone. I was taught early on by both my mentors, Claire Simpson (Platoon) and Paul Hirsch (the original Star Wars), that a well-cut work track is crucial. (Paul said, "If you cut the sound right, the picture will follow.") So I really work the production tracks myself, finding gems in alternate takes, smoothing cuts and leveling things out. Only then do I give the cut to Warren to start pulling and cutting sound effects. When he does this, I start trying different temp music I've pulled. When I'm done, if Warren is still working on sound (on a big sequence this can easily take a week), I'll start working on the dailies of other scenes, pull selects and make a first cut. I'll take a scene I first-cut the night before and do a second pass on the dialogue track of that scene. It's a little like an assembly line. I usually have three or four scenes I'm working on at once, at different stages of polish.

Hullfish: How specific do you get, Andrew, with sound design and room ambience and that kind of stuff so that your visual cuts work better?

> "Movies have rhythms and part of the rhythm is how the sound is working."

Andy Weisblum, Alice Through the Looking Glass: I'm pretty particular about it and pretty particular about other people introducing sounds at the eleventh hour that have nothing to do with the context with which we've been working the whole time. Quite often I just say, "I don't want to hear somebody else's new version of my sound." "I don't need to hear that thunder. I have a thunder that works fine there." It's just distracting to me in understanding how it's working, so leave it the way it was. Movies have rhythms, right? And part of the rhythm is how the sound is working. So, it's not

an arbitrary change to adjust an ambience or to adjust a sound effect. It actually changes the way the scene feels. And it's not better simply because it's new. I like to try and have a dialogue with whoever is designing the sound as early as possible at getting sounds from them; so they have some ownership and information in terms of what is actually ending up in the track, and use the temping process for previews and screenings to really inform the final mix for later on. I just think that it's an invaluable part of the storytelling and helping flesh out an idea. Sometimes a sound effect or a sound idea would inform a visual idea that we would hand off to the visual effects department, which had to do with some of the minutiae I think and some other character things and vice versa.

Kelley Dixon, Breaking Bad: Sound design is super important! It's really important for an editor to be able to communicate the sound needs of a scene and then let the assistant jump in and create. And the assistant needs to be fearless! Also, you only get one real shot at conveying your thoughts about how the scene should play, so you've gotta use every opportunity to sell it!

Fabienne Bouville, American Horror Story: Everything about American Horror Story is crafted and honed. Each season is completely different, and we are constantly looking for a fresh strategy for everything. The sound design is key, and I discuss it with my assistant and then turn it over to them. They will comb through our extensive sound library and distort the individual sound effects in every which way—it's a real free-for-all—to get the kind of quality we are looking for.

> "Talk to the assistants about the intention of the scene and what something should sound like."

Hullfish: Kelly, how are you making sure the assistants are delivering a sound design for you that you're happy with?

Kelly Matsumoto, Star Trek Beyond: We talk to the assistants about the intention of the scene and what something should sound like. They're really creative in trying to come up with sound effects by combining things from the sound effects libraries and coming up with sounds, some of which were quite funny and stayed until the end. Also, the assistants were excellent at doing a lot of temp ADR for added lines—we didn't realize we had such great performers in the cutting room!

Fred Raskin, The Hateful Eight: I normally do extensive sound design because I can't accurately judge how my cuts are working without having background and full

sound effects in there. Having said that, even during the Kill Bill days, Quentin (director, Quentin Tarantino)—and truthfully, myself also—were very susceptible to "**temp lock**." The more we hear something, the more we like how it sounds, the more we become married to it. So something that I did on both Django and this movie is that the moment we finished a sequence, I would have my assistants ship it off to Wiley Statemen and Harry Cohen, our supervising sound editors, and do a full-on sound design pass and get me LCR tracks that I could bring in to the Avid as a full mix. So the material we were falling in love with was coming from the sound guys and was representative of what we were ultimately going to come up with. So we were falling in love with the right stuff instead of the library effects that I've been using for 10 years.

> **Temp Lock:** The condition that occurs when the director, editor and production team fall in love with something that was only supposed to be placed into the edit temporarily, often with cuts of music that can't be licensed. The permanent replacements never sound right afterwards.

Hullfish: Cheryl, on The Martian, what was the working relationship between the editorial team and the sound production team?

Cheryl Potter, The Martian: Very early on, we were giving them pieces of the film to work on, so they weren't stabbing in the dark. We'd send them a 6 minute sequence, and in this 6 minutes, you'd have some interior of the "HAB" and some exterior of Mars and some NASA control room. We were being really picky about which sections we wanted to give to Oliver to sort of start off with. We wanted to find a section that covered a bunch of different locations, so they could start building what these different locations are going to sound like. So then when they would send it back to us, the assistant would say, "Well since we sent it to them, the cut has changed, so let's pull up the version that we sent to them, lay the sound to it that they sent back, play it for Pietro and Ridley. Very early on it started the discussion about which way the sound's going to go.

One thing that Ridley was really big on was the breaths, because there're so many scenes where they're wearing helmets. We really wanted to hear the sound of the breaths in the helmets, and we had those sounds from our first sound team "care package."

> “If a sound is not right, it throws the whole scene off.”

Maryann Brandon, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: We had a lot of temp tracks that we got from Skywalker Sound. JJ (Abrams) is very sound sensitive. If a sound is not right, it throws the whole scene off. Both of us would rather watch a scene silently—especially an action scene—than have the wrong sound in a film.

Kelly Matsumoto: There were so many elements in Star Trek Beyond that were up to the imagination as far as what a Swarm ship sounds like or an older generation of the familiar Transporter beaming sound effect. It’s not like on our other Fast and Furious films, where the sound of the cars—although enhanced—is more realistic. At the same time, we wanted to honor the original series: the legacy sounds of the Enterprise. Peter (supervising sound editor, Peter Brown) built sounds that were very close to them, but were actually different. He played what the actual 60s Enterprise transport beam sound effect was and then how he designed it for our film. It’s really cool how the new sound is faithful and yet different.

Hullfish: Jeff, how important is it on these big action sequences—or even in dramatic scenes—to have good sound design to sell the visuals?

Jeffrey Ford, Captain America: Civil War: Matt (co-editor, Matt Schmidt) and I work with Shannon Mills and Dan Laurie at Skywalker Sound. Shannon comes on early, so what we’ll do is the first couple of months we’re cutting and using sound from the other movies, like we’ll cannibalize the sound effects from Winter Soldier, and we have those as separations from our earlier work, so we’ll use that to fill in and grab movement and punching and stuff from previous mixes that we’ve done because those are all conforming to our taste, and we have a palette of sounds of Cap’s shield that Shannon has made, and as we read the script, we kind of know where we’re going, and I’ll call Shannon about two months in and say, “OK, it’s time to start making stuff because I have some scenes to show you,” and Shannon will start making special sounds, like Vision has a beam that he fires from his forehead and Wanda has her magical powers, and Shannon also designed the Ant-Man sounds, so he has the sounds for Lang shrinking and growing.

> “We have to edit the sound as we edit the picture. We have to design them together.”

So it's a great collaboration that starts really early, and Shannon will start sending me palettes, and I'll ask for adjustments, and Matt and I will cut those in, cannibalizing the more mundane effects like we have an effects library of flipping cars because we flip cars in every one of these movies, so if we need a flipping car, we have plenty of them, but what I need from Shannon are those narrative moments that have to be shaped. So that's how we work and start building the track, and I need to build the track as close to the track that we're going to use at the finish as we go along, so we are refining that track—constantly mixing and refining during the entire process so that we're always trying to get it to the most finished state it can be with the most finished and unique material.

We don't want to go in at the end and rip all that sound out and put in new sound. That'd throw off our perception. We have to edit the sound as we edit the picture. We have to design them together. So many of Shannon's great sound design elements create great transitions and great emotional feelings as well as the superhero technical stuff. For example, there's a wonderful moment that Shannon did in Civil War where Bucky is walking across the street in Bucharest, and he sees that the news-stand guy is staring at him. The guy has a weird look in his eye, and he realizes he recognizes him. So he crosses the street and picks up a paper and realizes that the guy's been looking at a wanted poster of him. Shannon did this incredible thing where he muted the production tracks and added this unique sound to make it feel like we went into Bucky's head for a second, we hear the blood flowing in his brain—giving us his sonic point of view as he wonders if he's caught—and all of this weird, undulating low-end stuff that flows into where Cap has entered Bucky's apartment, and it just created an enormous tension and it created a wonderful transition, and it reinforced point of view, and for that, Shannon is a god. He was thinking about story. He was thinking about character, and it was all done sonically.

ADR (Automated Dialogue Replacement)

Hullfish: Mike Hill and Dan Hanley cut In the Heart of the Sea. There were scenes shot with wave and wind machines, and there's no way to get usable production sound. They said that was very difficult to cut because of that. You can't hear any dialogue at all.

Lee Smith: We had that on Master and Commander. I asked the studio to build a small ADR studio while we were on location because in that instance there's no way to use what was recorded, but we always pushed that it didn't matter what the problem was, "Roll sound. It's vital." Because even if it's the tiniest squeak of a noise, it gives us some direction and sync. I know we're going to have to ADR, but pretend

we're not using ADR, and they did. At the same time, we'd steal the actors straight after that day and wheel them into our little ADR booth and get them to re-record their dialogue because some of the original recordings were completely inaudible, and the actors were kind of ad-libbing.

If you waited six months, no one would know what they were saying. It's just lips flapping in the background. In general terms, they could all remember, so we'd just shoot a whole load of takes, and at least I could edit with something where I could put the storm effects in, and I could play it back so the scene would make sense. There were vital story points in the body of that. I generally cut sequences like that mute because you don't want to be swayed by the crappiness of the location sound. I would cut it all mute and then go in and patch the sound, review it, then go in and have another cut mute and then patch the sound again. Because I'd found in the early days when I was a kid, I wouldn't do that, and I'd get very frustrated and very confused by what I was doing because I was trying to patch the sound as I went to make it all work at the same time, and it was like trying to steer something that just kept crumbling underneath me.

Hullfish: Because of the sound …

Lee Smith: Yes. I was so sound literate that I just couldn't bear it. I was fixing the sound, cutting picture all at once, and it just wasn't working. Then as soon as I turned the sound off … it's funny, your brain has to process a whole lot of information, and if you turn off the sound, there's a whole lot of stuff you're no longer thinking about. You can just build a very complicated sequence a lot quicker.

Brent White: We used ADR to punch up jokes and storytelling where we're writing jokes on the backs of people's heads and stuff. Becky Sullivan, who was our dialogue person, was amazing. We'll bring in Kristin and Melissa and Kate, and they will play in the ADR room and do things that are super-hilarious and create comedy that did not happen on the set or wasn't even intended.

Hullfish: To help readers who might not be industry insiders, to say "we wrote jokes on the backs of people's heads" means that you use a shot from coverage that shows the back of the person's head, so you can't see their mouth move, and then replace what was said—or not said—on set with what is recorded later in an audio studio. That way you can implant a joke retrospectively that was not spoken on set.

Brent White: Right. And the most genius example of this is in Anchorman. Danny Trejo, who is the bartender, and Will (actor, Will Ferrell) is at the bar, and he's drunk and he's sad, and Danny gives him this really long speech about women and how you

have to treat them and how important they are, and it's this heartfelt scene, and Danny is so funny in it, but on the back of Will's head, you hear "I'm sorry. I don't speak Spanish." (Laughs) That's an ADR joke that's huge, and it's one of those things that we do in all of our movies. We do an ADR pass where we add jokes that we don't have from on set.

Sound design is inextricably linked to music. That's why the next chapter is how editors use music in service to story. While score is eventually part of the process, for most of post, the music the editor employs is "temp"—borrowed from the soundtracks of other films and pressed into imperfect service until the talents of a composer deliver the final score that serves the film.

Chapter 8
Music

There's a great quote that says, "Talking about music is like dancing about architecture." As much as I like this quote, it discourages any discussion about music, a topic too important to leave undiscussed, so talking about music is what this chapter is all about.

The music most often used by film and television editors is really only temporary music—or "temp" in the lingo of the industry. These temporary tracks act as a "stand-in" for the film score, or incidental music, and are usually "borrowed" from other movie soundtracks or other instrumental music, and the use of it during early screenings is just standard industry practice despite the somewhat questionable legality of placing it on even a temporary cut, even though the temp is always replaced with the real score by the time the movie hits theaters or is broadcast.

Music has a huge role in selling the tone, mood and emotion of the scene. Throughout this chapter, you'll see that the use of temp is controversial. But with the kind of power that music has in film, it is seen as a tool that few are willing to do without.

The power of music is so fundamental to film that music in film actually precedes the advent of sound in film. "Silent" movies were rarely actually silent. They were almost always accompanied by music, whether a simple live piano accompaniment or a full live pit orchestra. One of the last silent-era films—and the first movie to win the Academy Award for Best Picture—was Wings. Despite its "silent" status, it had a full film score by JS Zamecnik that was delivered to local theaters as sheet music for local musicians to accompany the film live during its initial roadshow screenings. For shorts and other silent movies, the accompanist would have a collection of cues that they would re-purpose for various movies in much the same way that "temp" serves for editors now.

The Purpose of Temp Music

Hullfish: Pietro, in addition to your numerous editing credits, you also have worked as a music supervisor, so tell us a little about the purpose and role that temp music has in your work.

Pietro Scalia, The Martian: I love music. I have a vast library of music. When working with music, it's not that I have this piece of music, and I'm going to cut to it. Music really comes later. I cut the scene, and I try to find the rhythms and the patterns within the scene itself. Then the music comes. Do I need to establish a tone or a mood? Do I need tension? What do I want to convey, and when do I want to do that? Where do I place it?

For example, in The Martian, the surgery scene that Mark Watney does, I used a piece of music that had a slow-build crescendo, because I wanted to sense the tension and the pain, and I knew right after the crescendo, the high point, where I wanted to end. But I also had to figure out where to start it.

Try different pieces of music, just to see what effect the scene has itself. You might go for the obvious choice, and that's pretty boring, so go for the unexpected one. Sometimes inspiration strikes at unexpected moments. I went to a friend's house, and his wife had a gigantic Tibetan gong. She played the gong, and I thought that it had a beautiful sound: these expanding waves. I thought, "That could be a sound for Mars!" I suggested to Harry Gregson-Williams that the gong could be the signature of Mars. We used it to give a character to Mars, and the vibration was then incorporated into the beginning of the film. We used other techniques on the gong by scraping the surface so that it creates these "voices"—these unusual sounds. So rather than creating it in a synthesizer, we created it with a gong.

> "Temp is not just about putting in exciting music, it's about helping make transitions and emphasizing point of view."

Jeffrey Ford, Captain America: Civil War: Temp is not just about putting in exciting music, it's about helping me make transitions and emphasizing point of view and helping the directors tell the story. If you cut a scene together, as anyone who's cut a scene knows, you watch that scene 150 times. You're watching it and watching it and watching it to try to figure out what to do next. When you hear music, your brain imposes that music and its rhythms on the scene. When you take the music away, it will significantly change the functionality of that scene, which impedes the scene from be-

ing altered or revised. So what I like to do is work without a note of music. And if that movie is playing, if that scene is playing without any music—and you're not allowed to use that magic bullet yet… then I'll send it to Steve Durkee, my music editor, and he'll put music on it, and if he can temp it quickly, then I know my cuts are good. He'll kick it back to me if he feels it's hard to temp. So we talk by sharing cuts.

I met Durkee on Public Enemies (Michael Mann, 2009), and I saw what a brilliant guy he was on that film, and when we ended up back together at Marvel on Avengers, it was just a treat to be back with him because he has such a great sense of story. When you add underscore, you're adding another element of complexity, which is why a fight scene that is scored with a lot of drums can sometimes be good, but sometimes it's overwhelming to have all these percussive noises. I think the other thing to think about when you're cutting is that the soundtrack has to have a full life, and the music will come in and add to that soundtrack, but you can't do the same thing that the punching is doing with the music or you're going to end up with chaos. Similarly, if you have a really quiet moment between the characters, sometimes a cue is the wrong thing to do.

Sometimes it's the absence of music that creates the intimacy. There's a beautiful moment between Tony and Peter Parker where they talk about why they chose to become a hero, and he really lands on Tony in the moment. It's a very delicate cue. It's so soft. It's so subtle. And that's the only way it could have played. I think it's very difficult to do a good temp until you have a big swath of the sequence. You almost need a whole reel. You gotta temp it by reel rather than by scene because the music in each scene, I'm not that interested in. I'm looking for a sweep over the course of a sequence.

> "I don't like cues that lead the emotion, and I don't like cues that over-dramatize the scene."

Billy Fox, Straight Outta Compton: I like cues that are supportive of the scene, but in no way do they tell you how to feel. I don't like cues that lead the emotion, and I don't like cues that over-dramatize the scene. Hopefully, the drama is really coming from the scene. It supports the scene, so I'm not looking for any ginormous swells in emotional moments.

Hullfish: There's a scene in Brooklyn where the lead actress gets sick on the ship, and there was a very interesting music choice under that. What was the purpose of that particular piece of music?

Jake Roberts, Brooklyn: Obviously, the score that Michael Brooke eventually wrote is different than the score that you spend the working life of the film with because you play with temps (temporary score), which may or may not sound anything like the finished piece. During the edit, we decided that we needed some kind of music on the scene to help with both the scatalogical aspect of it but also as a rhythmic device to inject pace. Having decided that we wanted music there, it was really hard to find something that fit. We tried so many different things, and they were either way too serious or way too silly. It wasn't until someone came up with the idea of some kind of Irish Ceili music, kind of like a jig (Ceili is pronounced "KAY-lee"), and it just seemed to work. That was what we had as the temp anyway. That temp gets passed to the composer, but it's only really a gentle suggestion as to what they might like to try. Ultimately, Michael came up with his own thing. We really didn't have any of Michael's music on it until after we locked picture, so during the whole evolving picture cut of the film, we used predominantly Nick Cave and Warren Ellis's score for The Road (2009), perhaps counter-intuitively; it's a very different film. There's something about it that really seemed to strike the right tone.

Choosing Temp Music

Hullfish: Stephen, what's your take on score and temp?

Stephen Mirrione, The Revenant: Alejandro and I work with music all the way through. Especially for something like this, it's so important to inform a point of view in certain scenes or if something's becoming more subjective in its feeling in a scene or whatever it is. "Become Ocean," the John Luther Adams' Seattle Symphony Orchestra piece, was something that Alejandro was really attached to and really felt strongly that it was the character of this movie, so I spent a lot of time listening to that and working with that, and we spent a lot of time temping with a lot of John Luther Adams music because it had that great natural organic sense of nature as this poetic force. So we did a lot of work with that. We've known Ryuichi (composer Ryuichi Sakamoto) since Babel. He'd given us one of his tracks for Babel and Alejandro approached him to see if he was interested, and he was, so he came and met with us.

Alejandro and I had already temped a lot of music into the movie. We knew we wanted something minimalist; we wanted something where the music could work in a way where you're just hearing a little bit of music and then the natural sound of the movie becomes a part of the tapestry of the music … the music doesn't just completely take over. So in going through a lot of Charles Ives, Ingram Marshall, Olivier Messian, these early minimalist composers, Sakamoto came in and immediately responded. We knew he got exactly what we were trying to do, and he pulled out his laptop and start-

ed pulling out these tracks from his 40,000 track library and gave me probably 20 hours of music that I could then start to listen to and that then became a conversation. He'd write music and send us pieces, and we would respond and replace the original temp. It was great because he has a relationship with Alva Noto, who is a more electronic experimental composer. They've done a few albums together.

We wanted to give it a more modern feel or texture, so Alva came in and worked with us and Ryuichi to layer things on top or take pieces that Ryuichi had recorded and do something with them electronically, then Bryce Dresser came in as well … there was a moment where they all got together basically and started mixing all of their work together. That was a really great collaboration and really difficult because it had to be very measured and very disciplined because we wanted the music to inform emotionally, but didn't want it to become "movie music." It never manipulated the emotion, but just supported the emotion underneath.

Hullfish: Do you and Mike use temp? Do you cut it in before you finish the picture cut? Are you getting tracks from the composer?

> "The music never manipulated the emotion, but just supported the emotion underneath."

Dan Hanley, In the Heart of the Sea: A combination of all of the above depending on —the last couple of movies, we've been relying on the assistants helping us a little more. Mike and I both like to do a lot of the music and sound work ourselves. We're **chasing** in score and trying it against the cut. And at some point the music editor is coming on, and that's good because it's fresh input, and they start throwing stuff up against the cut. To me, I'm cutting it based on the dialogue and the rhythm of that first. I'm not putting in music and cutting to the music if it's a dialogue scene. I don't want to do it that way because it seems that if I'm cutting the scene right, the piece of music usually falls right. That doesn't mean I'm not going to be shaving a piece here or there or making an adjustment, but overall it seems to work that way. I'm always doing the initial cut based on the dialogue and the way that feels to me, and then I'll double back at some point and put music up against it, and in those cases, if it's an emotional thing, I may open up the edit at the end of the scene after the music goes in, because sometimes the scene will hold a little longer when the music goes in. When I had no music, I felt like I had to cut it earlier. That may adjust a bit. But temp music usually doesn't make me adjust my cut much.

Chasing: To temporarily sync a music track.

Mike Hill, In the Heart of the Sea: I vary from scene to scene. We have a large temp library that we call on. For the most part, I don't like to cut anything thinking about music when I'm cutting, but once we have a bunch of scenes cut, and we start to connect them, there are times when it seems like an obvious music sequence where the score is definitely going to be there, I'll start to experiment with different temp scores and see how it starts to feel. And there have been rare occasions where I have found a really great piece of music, and I'll use it even when I'm cutting a sequence. I'll lay down the music, and I'll cut the music with the sequence in the background, but I haven't done that very often, but a couple of times it's been usable. For the most part, I don't worry about the music until we have quite a few scenes cut.

Hullfish: Can you remember a scene in a movie where you cut with music underneath?

Mike Hill: We fell in love with the score of The Way of the Gun by Joe Kraemer and used it a lot in some movies in the early 2000s. We did a movie called The Missing with Tommy Lee Jones and Cate Blanchett. It was a Western and The Way of the Gun worked so well.

Hullfish: What is the importance of doing sound work in selling your visual cuts?

Julian Clarke, Deadpool: I use a lot of sound and a lot of music. The expectation these days is that you can approximate the feel of a finished movie right out of the edit system. It's a wonderful way to watch a scene. You can kind of say, "This feels like a movie here with the music and the sound" instead of needing to hum it in your head and look over the flaws. But the downside is that that becomes what everyone wants to see, so not only do you have to cut the scene well, but you also have to "tart it up" and have it be that sort of experience, and that becomes the new metric that you have to hit. It can be a pain because it puts a lot of onus on the editor to deliver these things.

Hullfish: How are you determining where you're going to pull temp score from?

Kate Sanford, Vinyl: Just tone. I don't necessarily stick to one composer. If you know you're going to be working with Alexandre Desplat, you may pull his music to present, but I don't necessarily do that; I find things from any place that have the kind of instrumentation and the tone that I'm looking for that is in support of the scene,

and I'll just use pretty much anything that I think works. I also have a drive with a library of other composers' scores from everywhere.

Cheryl Potter, The Martian: Pietro had this huge music library that he already had loaded up from previous movies, and he's constantly adding to it. He had a folder that had music from Sea of Trees, and he'd keep referring back to those. He plays soundtracks in the background while he's cutting so that he's constantly hearing different music and new music, and then if something piques his interest, he can turn and pay attention to it and find out what track it was.

Hullfish: I try to find other movies that the genre and style of the overall movie are similar. If I'm cutting a serious family drama—an interpersonal movie with a father and son—I'll temp with The Pursuit of Happyness.

Kate Sanford: Right. So, you're looking into similar genres, first of all. I'm working with my son right now on a documentary. Some of it is set in China, Korea and Japan. We are looking at other movies that are set in similar locations that have the kind of instrumentation that will support that regional feeling. When I worked on a romantic comedy, Management, which was a Jennifer Aniston movie, we found other tonally similar films, so Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind was a score we went to quite a lot.

Joe Mitacek, Grey's Anatomy: Depending on the theme of the episode: If it's an event episode, the music might get a little hyper. We might start pulling some feature film scores to temp. For example, we had an episode where the various doctors in the hospital were all working on their clinical trials, and it was all sorts of futuristic methods, cutting edge methods, exoskeletons and brain treatments, things that are almost within reach in the medical world, so there was a lot of this tech-heavy, technology-heavy music.

Hullfish: Tom, what was the process of temping Joy?

> "Songs become an emotional thread that hold the moments together."

Tom Cross, Joy: David (director, David O. Russell) had his own carefully curated library that he wanted to try in the film. His knowledge and love of music and cinema are deeply intertwined. He usually has very specific songs in mind for specific scenes. We'd have long meetings about music and where he thought songs might go. He cre-

ated a music catalog of his library with comments, scene suggestions and emotional tags that he shared with the editors.

My first instinct as an editor is to try to pin down every cut, every join, in a classical way. And that is sometimes a wall. David's filmmaking pushes the music to shatter that wall. It frees you from rigid formality and helps you create a new architecture; that's the style of David O. Russell. The songs become an emotional thread that hold the moments together. You can see that in Joy. Music is a common element in all of David's films. Look at the iconic opening of Three Kings, with its muscular hand offs from one cue to the next. He's a director that uses music in a way like no other.

> "Music can be deceiving. It can easily mask sections that are not well-paced."

Hullfish: Job, does Verhoeven like using temp?

Job Ter Burg, Elle: We did use temp music. I have to say, over the last few years, I've been trying to use less and less temp score when I am working on my cuts of the scene. I used to do that more, but I somehow started getting annoyed with using too much music too soon. Music can be deceiving. It can easily mask sections that are not well-paced in and of themselves. Then again, in the past I've also sometimes used a piece of music just to have a rhythmical guide when cutting a scene, only to throw it out once I found the right pace for the scene.

On Elle, it was quite hard to find temp score that would fit the film. There was not a lot of music we found that would actually "stick" to the film. I think it has to do with the ambiguity that is in this film and its characters. As soon as you put music to that, the duality is lost and it becomes …

Hullfish: … either one thing or the other, but not both, which is the art.

Job Ter Burg: … or it gives a certain color to a scene that may just kill the very ambiguity that we loved so much. So it took way more time than usual to find the right temp music. Eventually we did find some cues that were in the right direction, and then Paul started to work with composer Anne Dudley (American History X), who had also scored Black Book. Anne gave Paul a CD with her score for Poldark, a British TV series. We found two cues from that score that struck the right tone. So we used temp, and we sent most of that to Anne, and we tried to convey to her why we thought a certain piece of music was working, what we liked about it and what we didn't like about it … what we felt the cue had to contribute.

Joe Walker, Sicario: There's a danger to temp music, but you have to deal with it to survive the screening process and your producers. But if you do that by just acquiring pieces of music from other films, you run the risk of having a score that doesn't really add up, and you also might end up with a less than original score from your real composer. So there are many pitfalls to it.

Martin Walsh, Eddie the Eagle: I've got thousands and thousands of albums in my collection, and I spend a lot of time playing things against picture, trying to work out what sort of vibe a movie has, what it needs from somewhere, but of course, in the end you're only using somebody else's score from some other movie. The movie doesn't really come to life until we get to score it later on. I guess it's a road map really for a composer. "This is what we think. This is where we think it should be. This is where it should start and finish, and this is the kind of the mood we're going for, but please don't copy it or attempt to copy it." But you can hear it in movies when they do. I can guarantee you that you'll go to the movies tomorrow night and see a big movie, and you'll hear Hans Zimmer, but it's not by Hans Zimmer. It's just because the movie was temped with Hans Zimmer or some, some …

Hullfish: Thomas Newman.

Martin Walsh: Exactly. And you go, "Well, the poor composer's just been given that stuff and been told to do his best with it."

Hullfish: When you are working on these TV series, are you temping with stuff that was maybe already in previous episodes? Or are you pulling from a wider variety of temp, like feature films?

David Helfand, Great News: In terms of score, when you're dealing with a pilot or the first few episodes of a series, they haven't honed in on what their sound is yet, so you're experimenting a bit from every kind of source. If you don't have the resource of a composer, hopefully there is at least a music supervisor or a music editor, and everyone contributes ideas for what might work tonally. As the composer gets involved, ultimately you'll get a soundtrack or a library that is the unique sound of the show, but that also evolves. On Weeds, we started with one kind of sound in the first season that went in a totally different direction subsequently. Jenji (Weeds writer/producer, Jenji Kohan) had young children and was listening to "Gwendolyn and the Good Time Gang" (Gwendolyn Sanford and Brandon Young Jay)—who were doing these quirky children's songs that were very innocent but smart. She loved the quality of that music and Gwendolyn's voice, so she brought them in even though they'd never composed for TV, and that became a very distinctive soundtrack.

I do love cutting music, and it's an important skill to master. I wasn't musically trained, but I've learned tricks through trial and error how to shape a track around dialogue, although it's better when a music editor can help you. Then it's up to me to maintain the integrity of that music as we're going through the editing process and hide tempo changes on the fly when a scene is getting chopped to hell. If I'm struggling with a vocal track, I'll try cutting the lyrics like dialogue rather than the instruments. Psychologically, the ear hears the vocal continuity and is less likely to notice the instrumental change. It gets me by until the composer and music editor can make it truly right.

Cutting without Temp

Joe Walker: I'd had a lot of thoughts about working with temp music and coincidentally, Denis (director, Denis Villeneuve) had been feeling the same way. When we met for the first time about Sicario, we sort of pledged to cut without temp tracks. On a film like this, which has a fair amount of action, an editor would very typically have a clutch of tracks up their sleeve—the drumming from John Williams' Munich, a Hans Zimmer piece. I can just imagine the kind of tracks, and it would be almost impossible not to use loads of them editing it. I said to Denis, "Can we hold off as long as possible without any music at all?" And in fact, on this one I went even further. A lot of this movie was initially cut mute, which I've never done before.

In the past I've almost spent more time cutting—well, actually definitely more time on the sound than the picture cut, smoothing everything out, experimenting with sound effects. But, for example, the ride to Juarez (a tense action scene with the heroine and her team driving through hostile territory) was initially cut completely as a silent movie. In large parts of the edit, Denis and I worked together with the speakers off. Even dialogue scenes. Saying, "If this works as a silent film, then our storytelling must be getting there." And music will be another layer that we bring in later.

The first piece of composed music we received was the result of giving Johann Johannsson a completely virgin edit, there was no music in it at all. We gave him a clean slate, a tabula rasa, a film with no musical preconception of our own, and his response was fantastic straightaway. The first thing he sent was the helicopter sequence, where we go from the neat little suburban tract homes of El Paso into the desert and then follow the wall and soar over it to see the oppressive chaos of Juarez. All I'd done in the cutting copy sound was lay the slowest ever helicopter pass, and Johann came back with three or four demos with this incredible lurching bassline …

Hullfish: It sounded like a cello being run through a massive guitar distortion pedal. (Check out the track, "The Beast," in iTunes on the soundtrack by Johann Johannsson for Sicario—guaranteed to give you the shivers.)

Joe Walker: And then the drum that rises up from underneath it, just hideously distorted. It's an imperial march. I always thought of the story like that; it's in some ways a brutal and sarcastic look at imperialism.

> "If you want original music, don't make the poor composer imitate someone else's work."

You have to know what's propelling your story, if it's the narrative itself, or if it's the battery of tools that you're leaning on. I've just been in a situation before where it's the music that's providing 90% of the propulsion. And if you want original music, don't make the poor composer imitate someone else's work. When the real music does come, you have to provide accommodation for it. I start heavily re-cutting the film because the music enables you to change your attitude towards time. Without music, you can end up a slave to continuity. As soon as the music arrives, you can take vast chunks of time out of a sequence and create a more expressionist representation of events.

Hullfish: Dan, what do you think of Joe's "cutting silent" approach?

Dan Zimmerman, My All American: I do it all the time. It was actually a tool that Wes (director, Wes Ball) loved and embraced and actually did a lot by himself when he would do little things prior to Maze Runner. We'd be cutting a scene together or fine-tuning a scene, and I'd hit the mute button on the mixer, and we'd just watch it with nothing. It's truly amazing how effective it can be, you either find yourself really engaged, or you really start to find out where things feel as if—"We could really cut that shot a little shorter" or "Geez, that really needs to breathe a little bit." I find it especially helpful when you're cutting really big action scenes where you've got multiple cameras and where you can cut the same piece of action a couple of different ways, watching it with no sound—which is what I did a lot with the football in My All American. It helps you connect with what I really want the viewers to see and feel. If I can connect to a scene with no sound, I know an audience is going to be able to connect even better with sound.

Image 8.1 The sound mix team for My All American, edited by Dan Zimmerman (wearing black wristband).

Hullfish: Steve, do you agree?

> "Thorough sound design, effects and music are extremely important from day one."

Steven Mirkovich, Risen: I think sound design includes music, sound effects and backgrounds … and it is very important. I've worked with directors that don't want to hear anything with temp music on it because they don't want to be misled or influenced. They want to see if something works on its own, but that's more the exception than the rule. John Carpenter worked that way. He wouldn't want to hear music in my first cut. That made sound effects, design and backgrounds pretty important. You had to do a good job because there was no music to hide behind. Not too many directors feel that way though. I think we're expected to be quite polished coming out of the editing room with our first cuts. So music is usually a huge part of our sound prep and design. I enjoy cutting music and try to cut music myself for the first cut. I feel that no one knows the intention of what I'm trying to do more than me. What is the intention of the scene? What's the emotion I need from music to enhance that scene? Not to bombastically control or cover up but to enhance the scene: that's the job of music. The more polished you are, the more it gets people excited when they see it for the first time. Thorough sound design, effects and music are extremely important from day one.

Hullfish: Lee, several people have mentioned that they start listening to potential temp music as soon as they know they're going to work on a picture.

> "You are so much more critical of the picture and the story when you're not leaning on the music."

Lee Smith, Spectre: I kind of mix it up a bit. When I started cutting with (director) Chris Nolan, he asked me to not use any temp music at all in the initial assembly. Of course I thought, "Geez, that's going to be hard!" I did it, and it proved that you are so much more critical of the picture and the story when you're not leaning on the music. The music is the great candy wash that comes at the other end. So we'd wait until Chris would come in. We'd do a whole pass of the movie with no music whatsoever —not a note. Then we'd start applying the music. In the case of Chris, Hans Zimmer had composed all of the music for his studio films except for one. Hans was off beavering away, creating a suite of music that we were listening to every few days, but not applying it to the cut. When we get the movie working without music, then we apply the music. It's a very strict, regimented way of making the films, and it works as a process. It makes you incredibly diligent with what you use because a few films where I've helped out on, I've realized that when you strip the music away, you see all of the problems, and when the music's playing, you kind of don't. It's like taking your pants down or opening the kimono. All of a sudden it ain't as pretty underneath as you were hoping. Then when you rebuild it and then put the music back on, it's made it a much better film.

But then there's the instance of Sam Mendes or Matthew Vaughn with X-Men: First Class. I tried it with them, but they don't like watching cuts without music, and that's fine because I've done that before. In the case of Spectre, I got a music editor on very early on, and we took apart the existing score from Skyfall and strung that out and rebuilt cues to suit the new film, just to give us the temp score. We needed it to be in Bond's world. I saw no reason to pull temp score from other films. We did use other existing score in moments where we clearly couldn't build it from Skyfall, but it was great because we were doing a really polished version of a score underneath the editor's cut, and it worked, and whenever we played it for producers or Sam, I think there was only once or twice where he said we missed the point with the music. But 90% of the time we were on the money, and I think when we started working with Thomas Newman and he was re-writing it, he knew the temp score was pushing all the right emotional buttons. I know that would have been hard for him, because it's already his score, and I know how tough that is, but I kept saying to him, "But it's so

good!" I can't put other composers' scores on this movie! (Laughs) He was great and incredibly collaborative. There were a couple of sequences that we couldn't get right in the temp, even as I was assembling them with the existing music or other temp music, and he demoed up those sequences to fix that problem.

Hullfish: Jan, what about you?

Jan Kovac, Focus: On Focus, we did not cut with any temp, but when we had about 60 minutes edited, our composer Nick Urata watched it and talked about it with John and Glenn, and he started fleshing out some ideas, but we did use temps on Whiskey Tango Foxtrot.

Hullfish: Margaret, did you use temp on Mad Max?

Margaret Sixel, Mad Max: Fury Road: George doesn't like to cut with temp music. In fact we cut silently for a long time except obviously for the dialogue scenes. That is a big time saver as you don't constantly have to worry about smoothing out sound edits. And you tend to be more rigorous with the cutting as you can't hide behind the music. But he allowed me to use temp score for our first screening. That really helped me understand the shape of the film. We used an eclectic mix of music ranging from The Social Network, Led Zeppelin, Japanese taiko drumming, opera to more obscure European composers. When Tom Holkenborg started to score the film, we kept updating the cut. Having the score while you are editing is a huge gift. It can expose weaknesses in the edit, where shots have been too brutally cut or reveal sections that not even music can save and so need addressing.

> "It always works out better if you're not acclimating yourself to the temp score."

Andy Weisblum, Alice Through the Looking Glass: Scenes are always better with music. We all know we can make them better with music. I don't need that reassurance while I am working. But that's understandably frustrating for other people, so I've moved into a place where I know I have to do temp music to show it to people, because it's what they expect. I try and not let it pollute what I'm doing editorially, which gets harder and harder. There are other filmmakers that I work with who never use temp music, and that's my school. That's just the way I operate. And I've also worked with people who use source music and then that's the music. You're not working with temp, for the same reasons. For me, it always worked out better if you're not acclimating yourself to the temp score.

Hullfish: Andy says "no" to temp. Anne, what about you?

Anne Coates, Lawrence of Arabia: I temp with music a lot now. I didn't used to because it wasn't a passion to. In the old days when I started, we were not on magnetic, we were on optical film, and in those days I don't remember ever putting music on except in a dance scene or something like that. But it slowly became popular, so all editors started putting music on. It was like in the old days when you used to say, "Wait till you see it in color!" Because you used to cut with black and white prints because it was less expensive, and maybe you'd just print one scene in color to see what it was going to look like until you cut the negative, then you'd see it in color, so you used to say, "Wait till you see it in color!" and the same thing with music, "It might not quite be playing like you want, but just wait till we get the music on." I think that music is very important, but it's very difficult because it's very personal. Steven Soderbergh particularly had some quite way-out ideas about music, which I would never have normally used. David Lynch also. So you've got to get into their minds somehow with music, and you've got to come out with some ideas of your own, even if they don't like them. Try this and try that. But you can spoil a scene and spoil a picture by putting too much music on. Television uses far too much music: wall-to-wall music. I think it should be used very carefully to enhance a scene.

Hullfish: Kelley, how are you using temp on the shows you cut?

> "Things play much more 'real' when there's no score behind them."

Kelley Dixon, Breaking Bad: On Breaking Bad and Better Call Saul, we do not cut with music unless we're doing some sort of montage. Vince Gilligan started on The X-Files and learned that if a scene didn't work without music, it wouldn't work with it. Also, he found that it was a waste of everyone's time to temp in music from some other movie, and it was something else for the studio/network to give notes on. On other shows I've worked on, and especially pilots, it's quite the opposite: everything must be temped. I don't like much music, especially on a very dramatic piece. It becomes very manipulative, expected, and the moments lose their importance. Things play much more "real" when there's no score behind them, but like all other things on a project, you have to adapt to the aesthetic of your producers. One other thing I tend to question is the plausibility of music—especially source music playing as score. And this is coming mostly from the Vince Gilligan-Breaking Bad school of thought. We try to be very thoughtful of any music playing in the scene.

Eddie Hamilton, Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation: On this film, Christopher McQuarrie (the director) did not like cutting with temp score at all. He likes to cut completely bare and watch the entire assembly with no music, because his opinion is that if you can get the scene playing with no music, it can only improve with music, which I agree with. And a lot of the time with transitions and extended sequences, you have to imagine what the music will be doing.

Conrad Buff, The Huntsman: Winter's War: In many ways I'm more hesitant applying music because it's so seductive, it can sell anything, and it can also misguide the uninitiated to accepting something that isn't quite right. A lot of young editors will cut a scene to music, and I want to cut the scene then cut the music to fit the scene. I think that's probably true of most editors. I don't like to use it until I have to present something to a studio or an audience. It colors things in a way which can be misleading and makes things look great when in fact there may be more work to be done. I know that if I have any dignitaries visiting the cutting room, then I add music.

Fred Raskin, The Hateful Eight: I feel the same way. Quentin does not have me edit with music because he has very specific ideas in mind in regards to the music and doesn't want to have temp music take him out of a scene.

Billy Fox: If it's not on the screen, you got a problem. I'm a firm believer of playing it dry. I lean towards no music.

Hullfish: David, clearly a lot of editors say they don't temp with anything. Thoughts?

> "Turn the music off because you are stuck to its rhythms, and it's tricking you."

David Brenner, Batman v Superman: Some directors like that for sure, and I get the purity of that. I get the idea that a well-cut scene doesn't need music to help it out. I just like the play between music and picture. I like in a fight scene, finding a tempo that works, so kicks and punches are musical. This doesn't always work out, but sometimes a series of "hits" are fun. Generally, what Zack and I do is this: I start with temp music, which helps him the first time he sees it, and definitely helps the producers feel like it's a movie. It helps us find the pace of montages. But later, when we're cutting it down, we turn the music off. This is a trick we learned from Chris Nolan. On Man of Steel, he said, "You guys should turn the music off because you are stuck to its rhythms, and it's tricking you into thinking that everything has to be this length.

It's making you think everything is perfect. Shut it off." Sure enough, when we turned it off, there was all kinds of stuff that felt long. We took out so much fat this way.

Songs and Diegetic or "Source" Music

Some music in movies is not score. At times, especially for montages and credit sequences, films utilize popular songs or songs written specifically for the movie. The example that comes to mind is the theme song in virtually every James Bond movie or "You've Got a Friend in Me" in Toy Story. Also, virtually every John Hughes film delivers numerous examples of songs that speak to the film.

Another type of music in films is "source" music—or music that is supposed to be part of the actual environment in which a scene is taking place, such as music coming from a radio. Wordsmiths will recognize this type of music as diegetic music. Translated from Greek, it literally means that the music helps tell the story. Film composers may take umbrage to that translation, so maybe we'll revise it to mean, "is part of the story." Characters sometimes react or interact with this music. A classic example would be the cantina scene in Star Wars or the humorous scene in Wayne's World with the characters singing along with "Bohemian Rhapsody." Or for a brilliant use of diegetic music, consider "Stuck in the Middle With You" near the end of Reservoir Dogs as Mr. Blonde tortures a cop.

Billy Fox: Because music is such a huge part of what I like to do, Straight Outta Compton was an interesting challenge because it had what I think of as three layers: You have the NWA music and its edginess and what NWA is. Then you have a tremendous amount of "source:" the stuff that's coming out of the radio and the stuff being played in the background and that sets the tone and sets the time and place. There's nothing better than watching a scene, and you hear that song, and it takes you back, and it completely puts a time-stamp on it. So the challenge is, "Where does the score sit, and what is the voice of the score? What is the score going to be, and how does it sit in so that it's the right proportion to the other two big elements?" Universal was gracious enough to give me a music editor. I normally don't have a music editor until the director's cut. I pick all the music, and I cut all the music. In this case, I don't know if they saw it as an issue, but I had a music editor by the name of Jason Rudder—great guy—and we spent literally months trying cues, the right orchestration, the right organic-ness, the elements that would ultimately be the tone of the score throughout the movie. We struggled for a long time. Then we hit on some scores that fit. It was the choices that went through all the previews and what the studio saw, and it served its purpose until the composer came along.

Hullfish: Julian, can you talk about any of the stuff that you temped with on Deadpool or were considering when you were thinking about the tone for this movie? It's got a very specific attitude.

Julian Clarke: There are a whole bunch of songs that were written into it, so that stuff was already there, and then there was stuff that was written, but the song didn't actually work. Like there's a long sex montage, and at one point it was Frank Sinatra's "It Was a Very Good Year," and at another point it was a disco song, and neither song really worked for the sex montage, so we had to find something that had the spirit of that idea, but worked better for the sequence, which ended up being "Calendar Girl." Then there was the whole other component to it, which is the score. I felt like this character is so modern and crazy, I'm pretty certain that we were not going to go with a very traditional-sounding score, so I went with something hybrid in terms of what I used to temp. I used the Captain America: Winter Soldier score mostly, which has a lot of electronics and a lot of movement. I also find the hybrid score worked for action and for comedy because it's not so emotionally leading, and it's rhythmic in the way that comedy is rhythmic. In terms of how it transformed with the final movie, we ended up with Junkie's score (composer Junkie XL, aka Tom Holkenborg), and that is very hybrid and definitely more eccentric than what I temped with, but he dialed in just the right amount of quirk into the music, whereas temping the right amount of quirk is like an almost impossible job. It's way too easy for it to become too silly or something, so I erred on the side of caution when it came to having that sort of spark of humor to the temp music.

Hullfish: Kate, Vinyl has a lot of music in it. How did you approach score, temp and incidental music?

Kate Sanford: In Vinyl, it's the Scorsese model, which means source music, whether that means that it was playing in the room and then it gets louder and expands and grows to fill the scene or the other way around. Let's say music is playing in the scene and then continues—this way you can pull score from one scene to the next, and it can be anchored by something real that people are listening to. There's another way that we use score, which is that it's just playing. It's just sort of scoring the world. No one's necessarily listening to it. It's not coming from the radio or a record player, but it exists, and it's just score. I think that's been established as a convention. We all accept it, and all of us on the show love it, and I think a lot of the audience loves it too. We worked with score this way on Boardwalk Empire too. On other things, like movies, when we're not scoring in that way, I will work with temp scores from other films and try to get the tone right so that a composer can come in, and we can start to have a conversation about creating an original score.

Temping a Franchise Film

Hullfish: With a franchise, you've at least got access to the themes and some similar sounding stuff to temp with, right?

Alan Bell, The Hunger Games: Catching Fire: There was a huge body of work that James Newton Howard (the composer) had already done on the previous Hunger Games films, as well as just all of his enormous body of work. So we tried to pull from his stuff as much as possible. A lot of the temp stuff, Mark and I tried to go to James' stuff as much as possible, but we pulled some of our own stuff and threw it in there wherever we weren't getting what we needed from his score because each moment is different and requires a different sensibility. And then we had Philip Tallman, who is a fantastic music editor. He came on very early on both movies and did a lot of temp editing for us. He's really like a composer, so he's able to take a lot of different music tracks from completely disparate scores and change tempo and keys and get them to match and that helped us a lot.

Hullfish: Eddie, you said you really immerse yourself in the scores of the previous movies if you're cutting a sequel. Is that just to get your head in the right place to edit this type of movie?

Eddie Hamilton: It absolutely does. Also watching the other movies, and where they use music. Obviously most of the Mission: Impossible movies have a set-piece, which is pure suspense with no score. And we, I hope, succeeded to do that with Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation. There's a sequence where Ethan Hunt has to dive into an underwater computer vault, and his colleague, Benji Dunn, played by Simon Pegg, is walking through a highly sophisticated security corridor with combination locks, gait analysis cameras, and we played that purely for suspense and didn't use any score until the very end of the scene, so you've got several minutes there, a bit like in the very first Mission: Impossible when they break into the CIA, it's all just pure suspense. So all that stuff I'm kind of thinking about as the scenes are coming together, and I'm imagining ways of transitioning between scenes. Cinema is about making the audience do the work so that they engage with the story. Human beings are "meaning-making machines," and their survival is dependent on building meaning from what they can see to tell a story. We all try and build a story in our head with anything that we see. An audience loves being given one plus one and then coming up with two on their own.

Hullfish: Mary Jo, with Star Wars, you've got this iconic soundtrack. I can't believe you guys would have used temp score from anything other than the other six movies.

And, do you cut in temp at all? Do you cut it in after you've done an initial picture cut of the scene?

Mary Jo Markey, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: We have actually worked for quite a long time with Ramiro Belgardt, who is John Williams' music editor. He's worked with us as a temp music editor going back to Star Trek. I think it was temped with almost all John Williams' music. We rarely moved outside of that sound library. We concentrate on the picture editing for the most part, and when a scene is pretty close to being in a screenable form, then we pass it off to Ramiro, and he comes back with a couple options, and we all take a look at them. We're constantly refining scenes, and the music has to constantly be recut to fit the new cut. At some point, because John started recording early, we were able to start putting some of his real music into the cut as well, which was great.

Hullfish: On Batman v Superman, you knew you had Hans Zimmer doing the score, so did you temp with his music?

David Brenner: I used, of course, some of Man of Steel for Superman, for Clark and Lois, and for some action. For Batman, I listened to a lot of scores and ended up using mostly the awesome Enders Game soundtrack. Also Elysium for both action and elegiac moments—what a beautiful score. For Lex, I found the score for The Double, which was perfect, simple bold twisted slow piano notes that then grew with psycho strings. You know what I do a lot is I go through the script before shooting and think about temp music. I do this because later, I'm so swamped that the last thing I want to do is start looking through soundtracks. I made bins for each character's music, plus a fast action bin, a broad action bin, a tension bin, a love theme bin, etc. I know that the temp music I put on the movie is going to be thrown away, unless I find a source cue that ends up sticking (like Chris Cornell's "Seasons" in Man of Steel). But with score, I'm just going for tempo and tone.

Hullfish: Andy, you're working on a sequel, so how does temp work on that?

Andy Weisblum: Our music editor was Lisa Jaime. She started with the previous Alice film score as the base. We know that thematically some of the basic themes were going to be sourced from the original film, because they are great themes and they're very character-oriented. But then there were new environments and new characters like Time, and some other universes like the younger queens and stuff that needed a new musical vocabulary. And for that, temping-wise, she would delve into Danny's other scores and then build beyond that when something was not in the vocabulary that didn't seem to fit.

For temp music, I try to listen to it as little as possible, because it's not that different from the sound design—where if I can put a sound effect or design in there that came from my sound editors or whomever I'm collaborating with, I know that it can live there forever, it can be a part of the final piece, but when I'm working with temp music, I know it can't. So, it may tell us what we need to do later, but I don't want to become accustomed to a rhythm or use a temp to solve a problem that I'm having in the movie that then I have trouble achieving later on with the score. I don't assemble with any temp music. Of course when we show it to people outside our universe, there's temp music in it, but I don't live with it as I work on the cut. That's particularly hard for the comedy world, I think. Filmmakers, studio producers and directors have become more accustomed to just watching a movie that feels like a movie, which is understandable, but I don't want it to do things that we can't have later.

Using Score

Hullfish: Most films have to work with temp tracks during editing, but sometimes the composer is actually delivering tracks earlier in post-production. Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross did the score for Gone Girl. Did he present you with score up front? So, no temp music?

Kirk Baxter, Gone Girl: On the last movie, Gone Girl, there was no temp music. We brought in Atticus and Trent pretty early in the process. We'd assembled a third or half of the movie. They had a look at everything, and then they sent me about 15 tracks, and it was quite loose at that point, and I started laying those in. And David would give clues as well. Then I think we showed it to them again. It's like all things: first, "Here's a vibe." And it's funny how almost every track they sent ended up in the final movie, or a very close version of what they sent us. But as the process goes along, they got a lot more refined. The main body of the music that came in the first wave of stuff that was supplied was that kind of ethereal, dreamy, everything's going to be OK, but boils into a sinister rot. From underneath, it gets that kind of (growls low) sound. I had lots of procedural music. I had lots of kind of adrenaline music. I never had that straight-up horror until they actually saw the scenes. And then when those came, they had these titles that pretty much told me precisely where they should go.

> "Music plays a much more important part in horror."

Hullfish: Talk to me about how American Horror Story is creatively different from Masters of Sex or Glee.

Fabienne Bouville, American Horror Story: Music plays a much more important part in horror. It's mixed much hotter than with something like Masters of Sex. There's a big conversation with the composer that starts happening right at the script delivery. I'll send the composer a rough cut of an act or an initial assembly of scenes as soon as I can, and then he sends me ideas and themes with all the stems so that I can also play with them in other ways. It's a lot of back and forth and a really fun part of the process. Initial scoring of an episode takes a few days, which is why I need my assistant to handle the sound design. I only get four days for my editor's cut, and 90% of my time at that stage will be devoted to music.

On another show—Masters of Sex—I rarely talk to the composer. He's used to working with the post producer in the spotting session for all episodes and then the showrunner. I might sit in on the spotting session and have a thought or two, but the process is a lot more streamlined. I use the cues he's written for other episodes and other seasons as temp score, which gives him a good indication of what we are ultimately looking for in each cue. The overall feel of the music is very consistent, which is what the showrunner wants. She does not want to reinvent the wheel with each episode or call attention to the music, which would distract from the story beats.

In TV, generally directors don't get very involved in the music. Directors come in and out of TV shows during the season, while the editors are part of the entire run of the season or even the series, so we understand the tone of the show better, and we are a lot more clued into the process of acquiring and shaping the music. In one episode I cut of American Horror Story, the director didn't like the music I had cut in, particularly the needle drops, because they sounded too experimental. It is his prerogative to use music he feels is right for his cut, so I changed it for him to what he liked. But when the producers saw his cut, they felt, like me, that it didn't sound right, that it sounded too conventional for our show. We ended up putting all of the music I had originally picked back in.

Hullfish: You talked about getting stems from the composer. What are these audio stems? How are they broken out?

Fabienne Bouville: The stems I'm getting from the composer are typically for each instrument—3 to 10 instruments. I like separate stems so that I can pick and choose which instruments I want in the mix for a particular scene and change it up for a different scene, according to the feel I am looking for. It's a helpful way to work in

themes so that I don't just repeat the same piece of music but modulate it for different scenes.

Hullfish: Explain how you use stems to modulate the music.

Fabienne Bouville: Typically, each main character or storyline will have a theme. Sometimes that theme is dangerous, and sometimes it feels really tense, or it can be lyrical. What I do is that I modulate the music by pulling stems out or altering the stems, or changing the mix … I play with the music—and do a lot of audio mixdowns—making it sparse in one scene and more dramatic in another scene, while using the same theme. Instead of going to a completely different piece of music, you can make the original theme feel different. You can change the tempo of it. You can change the mood by changing the instruments in the mix. Sometimes, you can even create a whole new theme by mixing stems intended for different cues.

I don't consider myself a professional musician by any means, but I do have a musical background. However, I don't have much formal music theory training. I do my music work by ear. I'll try something, and if it sounds right to me, I'll use it. At some point, I'll send everything that I do back to the composer to make sure I'm not doing anything he would flat-out object to. I don't want him to feel like his music is being mis-used. It's a collaborative process.

Hullfish: Can you give me an example of a scene where you edited the stems to get what you wanted during the edit?

Fabienne Bouville: It happens all the time. But I remember there was one story-line last season that involved a crazy ventriloquist. Neil Patrick Harris played this part where he really loses it. He has a doll he thinks is real, and he has long discussions with the doll, and he's having a total breakdown and ends up killing the doll—or so he thinks. So with the composer, we had the idea that his theme should be like a machine that's breaking down. He sent me a cue in stems, and I ran the theme intact during a relatively normal interaction in the scene, but then I broke up the stems and cut them in a fairly random and completely non-musical way so that they sounded like a machine breaking down. I repeated the process while emphasizing different instruments from the stems for different scenes. When I was done, I sent the show back to the composer for his impressions, and he was completely game for it.

The editor uses pacing, structure, performance, sound design and music to tell a story. However, we've missed a critical element in delivering a successful film to an audience: the relationship between the director and the editor is fundamental to the process. This collaboration has been described as a marriage. Fostering a bond with

the director and understanding the way it is nurtured is the key to not only the success of the film, but the success of the editor's long-term career. As talented and skilled as an editor is, being known as a trusted collaborator is the only way an editor gets the next gig. That is the subject of our next chapter.

Chapter 9
Collaboration

An editor's most critical relationship is with the director. This chapter explores the working methodologies, social interaction and the development of a deep sense of trust that is necessary in a healthy collaborative environment.

One of the key elements of this collaboration is reliance on a personal connection, an ability to navigate the political environment and an understanding of the need for social skills. So much of this book is dedicated to the creative, technical and organizational skills necessary to succeed as an editor, but for years I've talked to many colleagues about the fact that equal to—or even surpassing—the artistic skill of the successful editor are his or her social skills.

Those skills start with acing the job interview.

Landing the Gig

Hullfish: Jeffrey, you edited in the unusual situation of working with not one, but two directors. How did you know that your collaboration was off on the right foot?

Jeffrey Ford, Captain America: Civil War: I met them briefly, and Kevin Feige (producer) had pitched the idea to me before I had met them. He said, "We're doing a 70s paranoid thriller." And I said, "You're kidding. I have to do that. That's my favorite genre of all time. It sounds amazing." Three Days of the Condor basically. And so when I met with them, I said, "I really want to do this, but I'm finishing up Iron Man III, I'm exhausted." I was trying to find a way to get a sense of these guys, because I'd never met them, and I wondered if we'd be good collaborators because I didn't want to be on a movie if I was the wrong guy. So I want to compare notes with the directors to see if we have the same taste in movies or acting or anything like music, so we know we're good collaborators. I said, "Could you guys list some movies that are sort of references for you as you think about this film?" And I thought, if they list the right three, then I'll totally do this job. The first one they mentioned was The Con-

versation (1974, Gene Hackman), and I said, "Just stop now. You don't need to list any more. If that's the first one that comes out of your mouth, I will be great on this, and I need to work on this movie. Please let me be on this movie." They were super-cool, and we knew we would click. I had so much fun working with them on Winter Soldier.

Hullfish: Eddie, what did you do to land some of these huge projects you've worked on?

> "One thing which they value enormously in an editor is to have a storytelling collaborator."

Eddie Hamilton, Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation: I always prepare a comprehensive criticism of the script: where its strengths and weaknesses lie and how perceived story problems could be solved at that stage rather than in the cutting room, which is where they will always be solved, often at greater expense. And part of the reasons that I like to do that is that over the years, I have read a lot of scripts and edited a lot of films based on those scripts, and all the problems that I felt when I read the scripts are always there in the cutting room. And it's much more difficult to fix them then, or it's a kind of a work-around, or it's unsatisfactory. So I'm very vocal when I meet directors to explain to them what is great about their script and what could be improved. And I think that is one thing which they value enormously in an editor: to have a storytelling collaborator and somebody who has the best interest of the film at heart and somebody who will fight in the film's corner.

Joe Walker, Sicario: You have to walk a fine line, though. If you come on too heavy with the problems of the script, you can turn the meeting into a negative spiral, and you end up annoying the director or not sufficiently advertising your desire to work on the project. I remember having reservations about one particular scene in Sicario, but I didn't dwell on it. In interview, it's better to dwell on the things you feel passionate and positive about.

Hullfish: Jake, talk to me a little bit about landing Brooklyn.

Jake Roberts, Brooklyn: As with all jobs, it just comes down to sitting down with the director and discussing the project. I got sent the script, and I literally knew nothing about it. I saw that it was called Brooklyn and assumed that it was going to be a hipster rom-com. I had to read the screenplay more than once to get the feel for the tone of it, because the first time I'd been playing the wrong movie in my head; I kept ex-

pecting something to happen like Tony to reveal himself as a wife beater or Eilis to get pregnant. I had to re-read it knowing the stakes and calibrating myself to its subtle tone and relatively low-key drama. Then I went and met John (director, John Crowley), and for both of you, it's a sort of feeling-out process. It's like going on a first date with someone. Sometimes there's just no chemistry, no matter how much you might want the job and be qualified for it; you and the director just aren't simpatico or have the wrong energy, and you probably don't get it. It can be as simple as that. Obviously you have to be qualified, and you have to say some intelligent things about the material, but it does often come down to gelling with someone. It's like buying a house. You pretty much know the minute you walk through the door—it may look good on paper, but if it doesn't have that feeling, you're not going to buy it. But it's the director that gets to make the choice. It really does come down to "Do I want to spend three months in a room with this person?"

Styles of Collaboration

One of the things you should get from this chapter is that collaborative styles vary tremendously between directors and between projects, and a good editor is able to adapt to whatever style the director prefers or that the project calls for. This entire book is about seeing the differences and similarities between editors, but this section specifically is one that should be read with an understanding that there is no "right" way to collaborate. This section on style describes an entire spectrum of methodologies and styles of collaboration.

Hullfish: Brent, you are kind of the go-to guy for three or four directors and have done several films with each of them. Do their collaborative styles differ?

> "You need to be as open to the process as possible."

Brent White, Ghostbusters: I don't know that I do things different with each guy. I just do what I do. I try to be as open to what it is that they're trying to do and be open to exploring the material to find out what's the best laugh, what's the joke that we want to tell, because in any given situation there are a lot of jokes, and some of them are really funny, some are a little broad. So we could do the broad joke that's easy or we could do the smarter joke or the more pointed joke or the joke that's more towards character or the piece that actually helps the arc of the story and all those kinds of things.

It depends on the movie too, and the collaboration with the guys is always about the amount of time you can spend with them. Judd has amazing things going on all the time, so your time with him is really valuable. It's a matter of having the most options and ideas and stuff ready for him when he can come and sit with you. With McKay, the cutting room is like a refuge for him. So it's great when he shows up, and we spend a fair amount of time going through things and getting them set. And with Paul we spend some quality time just sitting side by side in a room and going over stuff. Each thing works great for the type of movie they're trying to do. I put that first assembly together and try different jokes and try the things I like and the things that make me laugh, and when I'm done, I've seen that movie, and I'm happy to now say, "Let's make a different movie. Let's make Paul's movie." And once we get that all put together, we say, "Let's make the movie for the first preview." That way you don't get tied down with things. You can be as open to the process as possible, and hopefully it will deliver the kind of laughs and moments that will eventually entertain an audience.

Image 9.1 Director Paul Feig and Ghostbusters editor Brent White with ECTO1.

Hullfish: Conrad, you've been a long-time collaborator with James Cameron.

Conrad Buff, The Huntsman: Winter's War: I remember the first time running a scene for Jim. It was on film, of course, in those days. I was very nervous. I had never worked with him before. And I ran the sequence: it was the sub chase (on The Abyss), and afterwards, he sat back and said, "Well, that doesn't suck!" (Laugh) And from that point on, we've gotten along wonderfully. He's given me complete freedom to sink or swim. He generates an enormous amount of material, but he generates an enormous amount of good material, so that makes it all the more subjective in terms of structure. And for some reason, he's just always felt comfortable with my choices.

Most of my work wouldn't get changed very much, if at all. I do respect the guy a lot. He certainly does his homework and works harder than anyone on the film. He loves all of the different areas of filmmaking. He's very prepared. But at the same time, there's a lot of freedom working with his material. And he certainly has let me explore it, with happy results. The funny thing is, on several of the films, the producers have said, "Jim won't need you or anyone this time because he is going to edit the film himself." And it never proves to be the case, because he's too consumed with all the other details. Ultimately he ends up inviting me, or in the case of Titanic, Richard Harris, back, as well, to take on different sequences to help get it done. But he's not sitting over our shoulders.

Hullfish: Do you find that a lot of that collaboration is simply showing him the work that you're doing, or is it a lot of talking?

> "What I normally do is react to things I like and communicate the story."

Conrad Buff: I think it's just a matter of interpreting his material. The second film I worked with him on, Terminator 2, we actually would do marathon daily sessions on Saturdays. We'd go five and six hours at a time because Jim wanted to look at all of the material with us. The next two films, fortunately, we didn't endure that kind of pain of six-hour marathon sessions every week. I think he just finally got so comfortable with whatever we were doing to interpret his material, he let go and didn't give us notes. So, on the last one I did, Titanic, we hardly ever spoke. He was in Mexico, shooting, when I started. I just worked at his house in Malibu. We had editing rooms set up there. And just took the material and did what I normally do, which is react to things I like and try to communicate the story. And then, he would look at sequences and say, "Great!" Or if he had a question, or wanted to explore something himself, he could always grab it and rework it. But honestly, I watched that film a couple of years ago, when it came out in 3D, and I just remembered that so much of it was seriously untouched, the sections that I did. I felt good about that.

Hullfish: Kelley, let's talk about collaborating with the producers to develop the long-term character relationships that we see on TV.

Kelley Dixon, Breaking Bad: I've been able to work with directors and producers and writers in the editing room who are appreciative of talking about characterization and talking about character motivation. I find that I'm disappointed when I talk with some editors, or different producers or directors, who don't really know why they did what they did.

Hullfish: Have a purpose. And when working in television, you've got to know where the characters and the show are going to go down the road.

Kelley Dixon: If you don't know where it's going, then you can't make an informed decision. When we were in the room and we were talking, it may sound like a little bit of banter between writers and producers. But as an editor, you pick up on what's important to them, and hopefully it can guide your decision making: "Well this character is just not sympathetic enough, or this character should be happier here." Then I think, "I don't really have footage to make him happier here but maybe in this other scene where he discovers such and such, I can make him happy about that."

Hullfish: Anne, you've mentioned that Sidney Lumet was one of the few directors—the other being Milos Forman—who actually knew the difference between 10 frames if they asked you to trim a shot. Does your collaboration change when you're working with a director when they really have that level of detail?

Anne Coates, Lawrence of Arabia: No, no, no. I cut my own way and hope for the best. Interesting with Milos Forman, we were editing with two editors at one time. The other editor who was working with me was an excellent editor, but he decided to go through the cut and tighten up 10 or 8 frames off quite a few cuts, and Milos noticed almost every single one of them and made him go back and put them all back in again. The guy was pretty impressive.

Hullfish: How do you collaborate? What makes a good collaboration between a director and an editor?

> "The important thing is to get to know the director as a person."

Anne Coates: The fact that the director will talk to you. I don't mean actually talk to you, but discuss. Some directors are very shy or reticent and they don't express a lot, but I find it very important to talk to the director and have lunch with them … something social. You're not talking just film. You're getting to know them. I think that's important and to be easy with them. With David Lean, that took me a long time. I was terrified of him. I was a fairly young editor. I'd done two good films before, but I hadn't done much, and he was regarded as one of the most famous editors in the world. He was upset that I was frightened of him. He was always encouraging me to say things. But the important thing is to get to know the director as a person, and it makes it easy to come up with ideas. I want to know his overall idea for the picture but not so adamantly that I have to follow it. Just like a blueprint. I want to be left

with a certain amount of freedom to do what I want, and he can change it later if he doesn't like it.

Hullfish: Andy, what's your take on working with the director?

Andy Weisblum, Alice Through the Looking Glass: In post I did the assemblies, and we'd watch scenes together and dailies together on scenes that we had issues with, discuss the options. He would go away for a bit, and I'd slap it together, and then we'd look at it. He's a very generous and trusting director with all of his collaborators and allowed me to explore things. Then we'd show it to him, and he would chime in on or elaborate on or change. He would participate. He had clear ideas of what he liked and didn't like, but he was always open.

Clayton Condit, Voice from the Stone: It was a very collaborative process on Voice from the Stone. The director and I had many discussions leading up to pre-production. We did scene objectives together as Eric Howell (the director), and Andrew Shaw (the screenwriter) refined the script. I showed up on set a couple days early and was just there for him to discuss and validate and start editing. Having gone over scene objectives together, I knew what he wanted. When I was ready, I showed him my first assembly, and we spent time together refining his cut to present to the producers. This was an indie film with a small but very collaborative group where we could have healthy debates and really refine the film as a team.

> "Scene objectives keep me grounded with the director's vision for the film."

Hullfish: You've mentioned scene objectives a few times.

Clayton Condit: For the director, it helps him stay focused during the craziness of production. Scene objectives become his touchstone as he is working with the actors. For me, you can often take a scene in different emotional directions based on performance and nuance. The scene objectives keep me grounded with the director's vision for the film. Later in the process as you get feedback and step back a bit, scene objectives fuel the creative debates as you remind yourself why you shot the scene. You are always free to evolve or change the objective of a scene as the film evolves, but you have a foundation to work from as you make the hard decisions of trimming or maybe even cutting scenes entirely for pacing and clarity.

Hullfish: Wow. I love that idea. So define for me what a scene objective is and give me an example.

Clayton Condit: You have to ask yourself, "What are we trying to do with this scene? What's the emotion we're trying to extract? What is this scene supposed to accomplish for the overall storyline or character arc?" One example was a key scene at the end of the Voice from the Stone where—as an exercise—we recut the entire scene, taking out all dialogue except for a single line. It worked beautifully and even hit the scene objective in a much stronger and more effective way. That is the scene you will see in the final cut.

Hullfish: I've never heard anyone talk about this before. Can you give me a specific example of a scene objective from this film?

Image 9.2 Clayton Condit editing Voice from the Stone at Splice in Minneapolis.

Clayton Condit: A scene objective can be a short sentence or just a few words that sum up why a scene exists and how it helps and fits into the film. One of the first scenes is of our lead character, the nurse, as she painfully leaves one family to go to the next place. The scene objective was to "Setup Verena's loneliness, pain & stress." She continues on her journey riding a bus as she adds a letter of referral to a stack of other similar letters. The objective was to "Establish backstory—setting her goal—lonely journey."

Hullfish: Collaborations between editors and directors really run the gamut. What was yours like?

Clayton Condit: Every time Eric came in, he would bring a fresh eye and find something that would make a scene better. I would find moments he had not considered. He would get me back on track if I had strayed. We would brainstorm different ways to create a moment or connect ideas. From production through post, the whole filmmaking process requires trust. It's crucial to create trust and an environment where you feel "safe" to try things without criticism. You need to stay open and think be-

yond what you thought the film was going to be. A film really reveals itself slowly. The script says one thing, until an actor brings their unique perspective, and then you get to play with all the nuances and directions you can take the film. We tried to be very deliberate in when to show scenes and watch the film down as a full assembly. You get so close to the footage that you do everything you can to stay fresh. The director is so close after production that he needs a break while I do the first cut. Then as the editor I get close to it, which is a perfect time for the director to come in fresh and challenge my cut. It is a true collaboration.

> "I am careful not to pass judgment on anything unless I am pretty sure I am right."

Hullfish: Margaret, the collaboration with the director must be quite different when he's also your husband.

Margaret Sixel, Mad Max: Fury Road: He loves talking things over and throwing ideas around. I have been very fortunate to have gone through the "George Miller school of film making." He does respect my opinion but to such a degree that I am careful not to pass judgment on anything unless I am pretty sure I am right. I don't want to mess with the vision. It's a big plus having that level of trust and familiarity with the director. I know exactly how George likes to approach the edit, so the whole editorial department works towards expediting that.

Hullfish: David, tell me a little bit about your collaboration with Zack.

David Brenner, Batman v Superman: He's a super visual guy. He was a painter before he was a director, and more than anyone I've ever worked with, he thinks in terms of pictures. He storyboards his movies himself. The whole movie from start to finish, he draws. He keeps books. BvS had maybe three books of his drawings. As for action scenes, scripts are usually not a great bible for how the action is going to be blocked. So before I cut an action scene, I'll look at his storyboards and at the pre-vis, which was borne from his storyboards. Or if I have questions about dailies that veer from the script, and I can't reach him because he's on set, I may look at the boards for answers. As far as general conversations about editing … neither Zack nor I are particularly theoretical. We're kind of more doers … if it feels right, that's usually the answer. But early on in Man of Steel, we did talk a lot because we didn't know each other. I wanted to understand what he liked from an editor, and he wanted to feel good about where my head was at. Don't get me wrong; we do discuss scenes, themes, arcs, etc. But we don't overdo it.

Hullfish: Martin, what was your collaboration like on Eddie the Eagle?

Martin Walsh, Eddie the Eagle: Dexter (Fletcher) was great. He's an actor, and I find that a lot of directors who have acted and come from the theater—which is both in his case—are just the easiest people to work with because they get it. They get the same language. We can each speak the same language about performance and story. A lot of technical directors don't quite place as much importance on that stuff; it's more about the kinetics and technical aspects of it all, and that bores me.

Hullfish: You said he's an actor and that he's all about performance. Was that a lot of your discussion? Finding and molding the performances?

Martin Walsh: Yeah. Fortunately he was really happy with everything I did. Of course he had some line readings that he was absolutely in love with that I had missed or lost or changed, and we were able to go back together and repair that stuff. And he was absolutely right. We cut some stuff too. I put some stuff back in that he wasn't madly in love with, and we sort of argued a little about that, and some you win, some you lose.

Hullfish: Mike, how does director Ron Howard work with you? How do you collaborate?

Mike Hill, In the Heart of the Sea: It's kind of a dream scenario. He's one of those directors who doesn't need to be over your shoulder all the time. He likes for us to come up with our own approach and surprise him. He has very little input at the beginning. He'll give us brief notes on some of his take preferences, but that's about it. When the movie's been assembled, and we've got a long version, we'll go through it scene by scene from beginning to end, and that will take a week or so, and we compile a huge amount of notes, and we'll just go to work on that. Then we won't see him for a while unless there's a sequence that he's particularly worried about or wants to be involved, then he'll sit with us and work for a while. Then once we've gone through all of the notes, we'll go through the whole process again. He has a lot of trust in us as far as picking out performances. He's often said that we coincide with his thinking on performance, so there's not too much conflict there. We don't always agree though. Sometimes he'll pick a take that might work better and vice versa. There's all that give and take.

> "If you're always working with the director, you can self-censure."

Hullfish: Julian, how do you collaborate with directors in general, or with Tim Miller in particular on Deadpool?

Julian Clarke, Deadpool: My attitude towards it is that you have to be flexible. Some directors are very hands-on. They want to be sitting in with you all day, every day, and other directors do it where you show them stuff and then go back and work on your own. I'd say if there was an ideal way to work that's most effective, it's somewhere in between because when you're working together, you learn a whole bunch of things about what the director likes and doesn't like, and they can have some instincts which are instructive to you about the movie that you pick up quicker when you're working directly with them, but if you're always working with them you can get into a situation where you don't want to try something because it's likely to not work, so you self-censure because you're self-conscious that you're having someone watch you when you fail. So it's nice to kind of have room to do R&D on things on your own when you get the chance. I've worked a whole range of ways, and I'm fine doing it any way. Sort of the middle route is the thing Tim and I did. He worked quite hands-on with me during the director's cut after production and then gave me space to mess around with things, then the further we got down the VFX wormhole, the more time I had on my own, and it became more note-driven.

Hullfish: When you were working on the director's cut, did you guys discuss stuff and you talked through it? Or was that about showing him stuff or going through notes?

Julian Clarke: We did a whole bunch of things, starting with watching dailies together. Deadpool was not one of those movies where we shot 9,000 hours. It wasn't so exhaustive that you couldn't wrap your head around the content. So we'd go through and review the best material and talk about it, then start constructing my first assembly according to what we talked about.

Hullfish: Stephen, many top directors have come back to you time and time again. Do you think that's purely due to your editing skill, or do people-skills also play in to your success?

Stephen Mirrione, The Revenant: I strive to work in a way that makes me indispensable to the directors I'm working with. If I'm doing my job right, then they would rather not do the movie than work without me. A lot of it comes from my ability to just help understand and execute their creative vision and be a part of their creative process.

> "It's a marriage. And that's about trust, commitment and willingness to understand each other."

Hullfish: A lot of that is your creative skills—that they think they're getting the best movie out of you—but that personal relationship is also critical to cultivate.

Stephen Mirrione: Definitely. That's a marriage, and that's about trust and commitment and willingness to listen and understand each other. It's not just from me. I think it goes both ways. The more films you do, the stronger that bond will grow. I think that's why you see so many great long-term collaborations with those two people: the director and editor.

Hullfish: Tell me about your collaboration style. If I were some huge director that you wanted to work with, and you and I were having that first meeting together to determine if I wanted you to be my editor, and I asked you "How do you like to collaborate with a director?" What's the answer?

Stephen Mirrione: Total flexibility. I really approach it the same way I think a therapist approaches working with a patient. I want to follow the director's needs, and if it's a director who likes to talk things through and wants to discuss what I'm doing before I do it, then great. If it's a director that doesn't want to talk and just wants to communicate through the dailies that they shoot, then that's a challenge to me too. That adaptability is part of the fun of the job. Figuring out how you can bring what you do and be expressive in your art in a way that is collaborative and flexible and being a bit of a chameleon, being able to shift as need be. To me, the beauty and attraction of feature film is that it's one of the few collaborative art forms where the director really is the one true voice of the whole movie, and the only way to really accomplish that is to listen and understand and respond to the journey that the director wants to go on.

Hullfish: Maryann and Mary Jo, you guys have a very long relationship with J. J. Abrams. How does that collaborative process work?

Maryann Brandon, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: Our collaboration is very close. We discuss everything, and it's really a trusting, "I've got your back and you've got my back" kind of thing. A couple weeks before the shoot, we get the script, we give him notes, he responds to those notes.

Mary Jo Markey, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: He is extremely open to ideas early on in the cut. Even in a first cut, if we realize that a scene would be better if we lifted a section out, he is not a director that freaks out. I can show him the scene the way I think it will work best. I always make a point to mention, "By the way, I took these things out." Sometimes he'll say, "I think we need that." Or he always wants to know why I took it out. Or he'll say, most often, "Wow. I didn't miss it."

> "Draw out as much emotional connection between the viewer and the story as you can."

Hullfish: How do you come to a collaboration with a director? Is it something that adapts and evolves?

Mary Jo Markey: When I started working with him in 1997 on Felicity, I was cutting the way I had always cut. It was always character-based, meaning-based … trying to draw out as much emotional connection between the viewer and the story as I could, and I think that fit totally with J. J.'s sensibilities. We share the same approach to material and the same sensibility about material and about what's important about shaping a story.

Hullfish: Some directors want to talk it through and discuss the "Why" of the edit decisions. Other directors are just "Show me."

Mary Jo Markey: When J. J. comes in, we look at the scene and start working on it, but there are definitely times when my hands are not on the Avid, where we're just sitting face to face talking about a problem in the scene and what is it that's not working for us. I think we've all had this experience: "I don't really love this scene, but why don't I love it? What is it that's missing? What's in there that shouldn't be? Or what's missing that should be in there?" We do spend a lot of time talking but not usually before we watch the scene.

Maryann Brandon: Even for a director that just wants to be shown, I'll still do a lot of talking if it's not working for me. It's like any relationship. My personality is my personality. I use my assets as an editor to make the best film I can. Different personalities work differently together. And J. J. and I and Mary Jo have a language that we speak, and that's why we continue to work together and our collaboration has been so successful.

Hullfish: Pietro, you have worked with some of the greatest directors of our generation: Oliver Stone, Bernardo Bertolucci, Ridley Scott and many others. Are they similar in the way they work with you?

Pietro Scalia, The Martian: I think most directors that I have worked with have enjoyed being in the cutting room. For them it's a pleasure to be there and to revisit the material. The movie changes continuously. The emotions are affected by how the story is told, how music is used and how sound effects are played. It's all about telling a good story, and I think most directors just enjoy that part a lot.

Hullfish: After doing several films for Oliver Stone, you formed a long working relationship with Ridley Scott, starting with G.I. Jane. Why do you like working with him, and what does he like about you?

> "Have a safe environment in the cutting room where you're allowed to be honest."

Pietro Scalia: I think we get along. We like each other. It's a comfortable environment in the editing room. I know his taste, and he knows mine after all these years. Ultimately it's the fact that he trusts me. I make the choices of takes, or performances, of music and sound effects, and he relies on me to do that. He looks at the cut. If it works, fine. If it needs to be shortened, we talk about it. If he wants to see something else or a different take, we discuss it, but he values my opinion. And what Ridley gives me is a lot of creative freedom. He's like that with all of his collaborators. Ridley likes that I have a point of view. I have an opinion about things in terms of what's chosen. In a lot of our movies, we created scenes and moments and emotions through images that were not intended for the way we used them. So it's this freedom of taking the film any which way we like. He's not precious about the material. He will always say, "How can we make this better? Is this the best we can do?" But we have a safe environment in the cutting room where I'm allowed to be honest and straight with him if something doesn't work or if there's something I like. You don't have to win every single battle, but it's important to be able to listen. And ultimately if there's something that doesn't work, it's much easier to work on the material and show it, rather than arguing about it. We also work very fast, and if we feel something works, we stick with it. We don't second-guess.

Hullfish: John, you've worked with Antoine Fuqua four times in a row with your latest movie. How are you guys collaborating?

John Refoua, Magnificent Seven: You know I started working with Antoine on Olympus Has Fallen, and even then he would allow me to have a week or two weeks to put the movie together. We developed sort of a trust that I can do whatever needs to be done to make the scene the best it can be. I don't have to put everything together and show him everything before he says, "Yes, let's take that out." On the other hand, I want to make sure that he gets to see every scene the best as it can be. We work very well together. As we've gone through all these years, he talks about what he wants the audience to feel in each scene and what should the audience understand about the character and what should the character go through. Most of our discussions are about what is happening in the scene emotionally and what sort of impact we want it to have on how it relates to what happens at the end of the movie. He points the direction of where to go, and he is open to suggestions and possibilities, so we discuss thing quite a bit. As far as collaboration with the actors, Antoine improvs quite a bit as he shoots the scene. Denzel likes to improv. A lot of the actors that they work with like to improv. The scenes are not what you see on the script. It changes on the day. I try to take the best ones and show him the best way a scene can be.

Hullfish: Jake, what are the differences between directors you've worked with as far as the working relationship running the gamut from complete autonomy to someone sitting over your shoulder.

Jake Roberts, Brooklyn: Over the course of my career, I've had both experiences. There have been people that sit on your shoulder and dictate every cut down to the frame, but other times I've just been left to it with very minimal feedback. As I've progressed through the industry, I've found that in general you get less interference because I think there's more trust in you and more confidence on the part of the directors that they don't need to micro-manage every little thing. They tend to only ask questions when things aren't working. It's sort of a first-film syndrome to try and really control every tiny aspect. The director would watch at the end of the week and give me a few pointers and every now and then say "No that's not at all how I intended it." But for the most part he was pretty happy with what I was doing and the material. That proceeded through the eight weeks of the shoot.

After the shoot, directors tend to take a break to catch their breath and restore their sanity, at which point the editor is left to polish and put together the first full assembly of the film. When I finally screened it for the director, it was just us sitting together in the edit suite, and at the end of the film I was really embarrassed because I had tears in my eyes. Then I looked over at John, and he was crying too! I thought then that maybe we had something.

With John, he liked to sit in all the time after that. There wasn't a day where he wasn't present, but he's not dictatorial at all. He likes to discuss each decision as it's being made, but he'll only challenge you when something is not sitting right for him. The majority of the performances are probably the ones I first chose because we mutually agreed that they were the best takes; thankfully we share very similar taste. But every now and then, the choices I'd make wouldn't jibe with him, and he'd ask, "What are the other options for that line or this bit here?" Or maybe "This bit's a little fast or that bit's a little slow." And that's really what we did for the first six weeks is just hone and refine and tweak here and there and that's how it went. It was a very easy collaboration and by no means a dictatorship.

Hullfish: Joe, how do you navigate the difference in dealing with directors (McQueen, Mann and Villeneuve) who are so different?

Image 9.3 Roger Deakins, ASC, director Denis Villeneuve and Joe Walker, ACE, at Cannes.

Joe Walker, Sicario: Well, it sort of adds spice to life. (Laughs) Michael was a huge fan of Shame, which is how I got the job. A lot of directors have a tremendous respect for each other's work. Having worked on three of Steve's films, I feel our collaboration has become very powerful. I feel like I'm the best editor I can be with Steve. He has that effect on people. He has high expectations, but he also nurtures and creates an atmosphere in which you can do your very best work. When there was a different way he wanted to cut something, he really had a great way of pointing me in the right direction. One of his really brilliant attributes is somehow leaving you thinking that you're the one who had the idea. He will just drop a thought bomb into the conversation. He rarely dictates each step.

> "When I share the process of reduction, he's at ease knowing that things were vetted."

Hullfish: Working with David Fincher on Gone Girl, you said that instead of showing him a cut, you show him a selects reel for a scene.

Kirk Baxter, Gone Girl: It's very specific because it's broken down into moments. He enjoys that. If I were to send him an edit straight away, that would make him a little itchy, because he'd say, "Well, what about all the other good stuff?" He covers a lot, so for him to be giving me a 15:1 ratio and for me to present one thing back and say, "This is the way it should be," I'm sure he'd say, "Well, how did you come to that conclusion?" So I find when I share the process of the reduction, he's at ease knowing that things are being vetted and that the choices are there. And as it gets further along … because we're doing this as he's shooting … so I'm three or four days behind camera. He's seeing these in-between setups. He'll log on and look at what I've recently sent him, and even after I've sent him a complete cut, he still might question a certain line. The next time I send it, it'll be the scene as it was, but when it gets to that line, there will be three choices in a row of the best choices or just one or two, or I'll take the audio from the best close-up and put it into two different choices of the two shot. He likes multiple choice. I like to work that way as well.

Hullfish: How does Fincher usually use the two cameras? On separate people—like crossing over-the-shoulders—or on two different shot sizes or angles of the same person?

Kirk Baxter: It's very handy when it's complete opposites on two different actors if all of their dialogue is overlapping. Then it's nice to have the coverage without all the gaps between. But most of the time David will do the two cameras kind of pushing in the same direction, like a two shot front-on and the B camera will be a raking two shot. And as he works his way in, it will be like that with everything, so I'll get a close-up front on and a close-up that's raking. Or my B camera will be from a different actor's perspective. I find that with David, there's so much more coverage, and when the scenes are cut together, they feel much more dynamic because you're not returning to the same angle all the time. If one actor says his line in a front-on angle and then you bounce to the other side of the table to another actor's line, then when I return to the first actor, I can go to the POV angle rather than back to the front-on angle. That's the difference with Fincher. That's what the beauty of Social Network was.

With so much straight-up dialogue, if you've got a boardroom and everybody's talking, we've got the perspective of whomever they're coming off. That's why you've always got the ability to move, and it always looks fresh. I see it when I watch movies or TV, and that kind of coverage doesn't exist. I'm continuously impressed in the most basic way, that he covers a scene. It's exciting to work out. It's exciting to have the kinds of choices I get. It's challenging. I find that I'm exhausted at the idea of doing a movie with David, but I'm excited more than I'm exhausted.

Hullfish: We, as editors, spend more time with the directors than just about anybody. What is it about your relationship with David that you work together so frequently?

Kirk Baxter: I don't ask for too much of David. I try to keep it as a director/editor relationship. A lot of people are asking directors a lot of stuff at all times. I try to keep my side of it down to just the doing. David won't sit next to me and work. He'll come in and watch what I've done. If I'm unsure of a certain thing, I might try it three different ways, and he'll react to what he reacts to, and I'll jump on the one he likes the most. I think he enjoys that I'm not a person he has to wrestle with verbally. That doesn't mean that I'm a push-over either. My arguing is done in the work that I present, rather than trying to persuade him. David's not really a person you persuade. You can either convince him through the material or not. So it's a really simple, clean dynamic. I know how to put him at ease by letting him see selects, by letting him see choices. I take pleasure in making his life a little bit easier.

Hullfish: Mark, I co-edited a feature with the director, so I'm very curious what your working relationship and methodology was in co-editing with the director.

Mark Sanger, Gravity: Alfonso has the film in his head. He dives between Editorial and VFX like a Tasmanian devil, working on the cut with me, then updating the animation as I'm supplying the latest cut to VFX. Changes he would make in animation would dictate an editorial change, which he would need to make very quickly with me in order to not let either department get ahead of one another. Essentially he was editing whether he was with me or with VFX, because the two were so directly linked on this film. The work would then hit a new height—what Alfonso describes as "beautiful accidents"—when a change he made in animation would dictate a change in the picture edit, which in turn would suggest a change that would further enhance the scene.

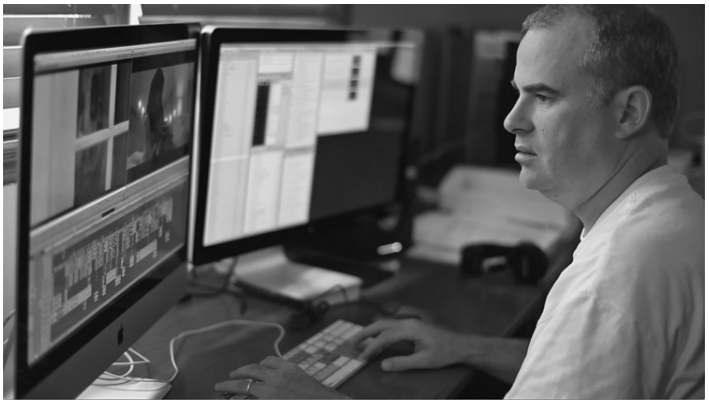


Image 9.4 Steve Hullfish's director and co-editor, Alex Kendrick, editing War Room on Avid. Courtesy of Steve Hullfish.

Hullfish: Tom, even the layout of your suite is designed for collaboration, right? I designed my suite specifically to improve collaboration, too.

Tom Cross, Whiplash: When I'm editing with Damian Chazelle, I sit most of the time. Part of the reason is how I have my room set up. When I sit, I'm closer to the sweet spot for sound because I have my console behind the couch. Jeff Ford was the first film editor I knew who set the room up like that. One time I visited his cutting room and thought he had a great idea. I like it because it lets the director focus on one big monitor. I also want to be able to present the cut with the director centered in regard to the stereo speakers. I always struggled with the more traditional old Avid setup. Things were always more off center, and the director would be looking at the big monitor but also be faced with all the other extra monitors and equipment. So then I thought "Why even have the other monitors in view?" I have my post PA put up black **duvateen** on the wall behind the monitor just so it'll black out even more.

> **Duvateen:** (alternate spellings include Duvetyne, Duvoteen) This is a light-absorbent black cloth (similar to a heavy duty black felt), that is used by the lighting department to either block light or eliminate reflected light. It's also used as a backdrop sometimes and can absorb sound.

The goal is to become immersed in the movie, hear it from the sweet spot and ideally have the rest of the room fall away.

Notes

Part of the collaborative milieu for the editor is navigating the political and artistic waters of "notes." These can come from the director, producers, studio or network.

Hullfish: There are times where I think I've cut something well, then the director gives a great suggestion, and I think, "I'm so glad that film-making is a collaborative process."

> "That's kind of your job, to respond to notes. You better toughen up."

Dan Hanley, In the Heart of the Sea: Definitely. As you edit a little longer, at least for me, I accept collaboration as part of the process more than when I was younger. Especially with Kern, when I was first cutting with him, and I thought every cut I did was perfect. I didn't want to hear any notes. And he said, "Well, you're not going to last very long in this business. That's kind of your job, to respond to notes. You better toughen up that skin a little bit, because it's not about you, it's about the final product."

Hullfish: Sidney, how do you deal with notes?

Sidney Wolinsky, The Sopranos: Sometimes people give you notes that are very vague, and you have to figure out, "Well, how can I accomplish that with what I have? What are the elements that are bothering this person?" Sometimes people are very specific, but what they say doesn't make any sense in the specifics, but I can figure out the problem they're seeing, and sometimes fixing the problem they've identified doesn't really mean changing the specific things they've put in their notes. So it's up to you to think, "What is bothering this person? And let me see if I can figure out a way of solving that problem, not exactly the way they've told me to, but that will address the underlying issue they're trying to get to."

I always like to work with the director extensively. They're a new set of eyes, and they theoretically had something in mind when they shot it. And they have a whole other way of thinking about it, so that person and I can bring it to a point beyond where I can get it alone. Then if you've got a smart producer, they'll see other problems in there that you can solve. Many people disparage network notes, but I figure at least this is another set of people looking at the work. Often the network notes are really good.

Hullfish: The network is more removed from the rest of the creative process, which is sometimes a very good thing. They are not as heavily invested or myopic.

Sidney Wolinsky: I feel that the problem with television is that everybody has a dog in the hunt or a horse in the race. So with all their good intentions, they still have their own special interest, but with a feature where you're previewing it with a bunch of people in a test audience, you're getting a totally legitimate reaction.

Hullfish: Margaret, what about revisions?

Margaret Sixel: We are very methodical about revisions. With dialogue scenes, I am structurally usually very close, but George likes to check every performance. If I were a director I would do the same thing. Sometimes I think, as an editor, you can cling to certain cuts as because you like them or it was hard-won, but one shouldn't be afraid to throw scenes out and start again.

Social Skills

Hullfish: When it comes to getting along with the director, you've got to be the person in the room that the director wants by his or her side.

> "It's not only your job to manage the footage, it's your job to manage the feelings in the room."

Kate Sanford, Vinyl: Right. And you really have to be on their side. I guess I don't want to overstate that people do get very passionate. It's not only your job to manage the footage, it's your job to manage the feelings in the room, and to make sure that the director and producers feel like your room is a safe place for them to express excitement, frustration—even, anger at themselves—anger at the process … and together you're going to work through it. There is just going to be a lot of emotion and a lot of intensity in that room, and you have to be the person that they trust to manage it. At the same time, it's your job to be somewhat critical of the material, so you have to figure out how to have them trust you, how to be 100% on board with them. Make sure you communicate that you understand the story that they're trying to tell and that you believe in it, and frankly, that's hard to fake, you really have to believe in it. So, hopefully you can get on a project that you really can put your heart into and that you can believe so that you can believe it together—but you don't have the privilege of being quite as emotional as the rest of the team. So, it's your job to absorb all the ideas and

thoughts and feelings, put them into action in a kind of a coherent pattern through the film that then needs to be communicated to other people.

The communicating to other people part, I find, is really interesting because a lot of times the director feels like he's got it or she's got it, and what sometimes is very hard is to say, "I understand what you want to say, and I understand these are the patterns that you want to build, but I'm not sure it's communicating exactly what you want to express. Can we try this? Or what about that?" What you want to do ultimately is have a relationship where they can trust you, and they know you're not criticizing them personally. Hopefully, if you have that relationship, they'll say, "Okay, let me see it another way." Right? I'm very respectful of the script and the dailies process. Not only watching, but I want to put together a complete cut as scripted the way the director intended with every single beat in the scene. I don't believe that you can cut corners unless you have a really deep understanding with the director and the shortest schedule imaginable. Otherwise, I think that it's only fair to show them what they shot.

Hullfish: How important is it to be able to socially engineer your relationship with a director and a producer and not make political missteps?

> "You won't have a successful career unless you are a very patient and empathetic and social person."

Kate Sanford: Yeah, you have to be very careful as an editor. You're the one watching all the footage so if you notice something you feel could be a problem, you have to know when and who to tell and in what order. I also learned that as an assistant for my mentor, John Tintori. He now heads the grad department at NYU, and he was very good about collaborating and knowing when to say something and when not to say something. So, before I even got into the chair, I understood intuitively and I understood explicitly that was definitely part of it. So, that being said, I think that you're not going to have the kind of successful career that you hope to have unless you are a very patient and empathetic and social person. Social in terms of a one-on-one relationship. That really is the most important relationship and maybe the most important component to being a successful editor, period.

I think it's going to be partly based on your creative skills and a little bit of technical ability and a great deal of tenacity. But ultimately, once you get into a position where you have an opportunity, I think it's going to be your patience and your interpersonal skills that are going to determine whether you're going to be successful and that di-

rector/producer and set of people want to collaborate with you again. The most important part of the collaboration is being supportive, right? Just being patient and supportive and, in a way, allowing the artists to express themselves. It can be a very difficult and intimate experience to be with someone who's trying to express their creative vision.

Your job is to take all that energy from them, all of their emotion, all their passion and all their creative resources that they have hopefully put into the footage and help weave that together and help them express their feelings and their ideas in a way that's going to communicate to other people. It's really, really tough. One thing about television is that you get to do that in little stages. So, you get to do that in an intimate way with one director and then you move on to a producer, and then with the producer, you kind of collaborate together on incorporating the other notes that come in from the studio.

Andy Weisblum: I almost never show people just one version of a scene. I usually have two or three. I can say, "Which one of these do you like and why?" And that's kind of an ice-breaker. It helps them dig in for what they like or don't like. Usually it's about the heart of the scene or a critical thing, and it just helps me, 'cause usually they'll end up saying what they care about. They have the right to see the scene the way that they expect to see it first. And then if I have another idea, I'll say, "Let me just float this by you and tell you why."

Hullfish: If you want people to work with you, you have to understand human interaction, be socially engaged and engaging, and be someone that people want to work with day in and day out.

Andy Weisblum: The editing room is probably the most sensitive space in the whole process because it's private. It's just the filmmaker and you for a long time, and you have to be sensitive to the fact that when the filmmaker comes in and looks at what you've done with their work, all they're seeing is where they succeeded and where they failed, and that's hard! That's sensitive. They're trying to convey something and trying to communicate something. When something doesn't work, I have to be sensitive to understand the intention, and how can I help it or improve it. What can I suggest to help achieve the intent? It's rarely telling the director that his or her idea isn't good.

> "It's your job to figure out what is it about the idea that doesn't work, and how to help it."

I think there are editors that will say, "Yeah, that's stupid" in a condescending way, and that's just wrong. You're there to help them achieve whatever it is they're trying to achieve. It's their movie. And even if it doesn't work for you and works for them, then it's your job to execute it and to try and figure out what is it about that idea that doesn't work, and how to help it. And as long as they feel like you're aligned with what they want and that you're aligned with trying to improve upon what they're doing rather than change it, then there's trust. As a director, you don't expect an editor to give the director notes on their material—that's not appropriate. But editors do that all of the time. And that's not your place. Your place is to help them achieve the goal. That's the only person you are listening to and until that person leaves, for whatever reason, that's who's running the ship. And it's very easy to lose sight of that.

Hullfish: Mike, any other words of wisdom for aspiring editors?

> "You need patience and discipline to stay focused. If you have a big ego, you'll have a problem."

Mike Hill: You need extreme patience and discipline to stay focused, and if you have a big ego, you might have a problem because you're not going to get a lot of glory as the editor, but what you contribute is huge to the final product. You really are behind the scenes making this thing work. I'm biased, of course, but I think it's one of the most essential aspects of making a film. You don't even have a film until you start honing away at all that they give you.

Hullfish: Maryann, how much of your "editing talent" is actually social skills?

Maryann Brandon: Social skills are important. It's important to be respectful. It's important to be honest. It's important to know when to be honest.

Hullfish: It's that trust factor. Once you lose the director's trust, it's very hard to win back. I just learned that the hard way on a film.

Kate Sanford: It's important to be very careful with that. I've worked with Terence Winter for six years on Boardwalk Empire and Vinyl and before that I edited a movie that he wrote, so I've known him for a really long time. Sometimes if I'm collaborating with the director, and the director wants to cut out too much, I know it will rattle Terence. So, we've worked out a shorthand way of prepping him to watch the director's cut, and I will privately say, "Listen, this scene got truncated a little bit, we lost a couple of lines here, just want to warn you." So, everybody's different in how they

want to watch your assembly or director's cut. I can read the frustration. So, try to be careful. I tell my students, "What's really important is get every beat. It's okay if it's too long. You have plenty of time to shorten it, but if you shorten it first, the director won't have a chance to see what you've seen. Let them catch up."

> "As an editor, you're always ahead of the director. That's your job: to be ahead."

Hullfish: I've talked to multiple editors about this, and it's just one of my failings. When I'm cutting, I'm like, "This line is never going to make it in the final movie, I might as well just cut it now," and the director is like, "Where's the line? Why did we start 20 seconds into the scene?" I'd just say, "Because, the first 20 seconds don't matter." (Laughs) Lesson learned.

Kate Sanford: It's hard. I find in a long-form narrative, I sometimes lose trust, especially with very sensitive directors, if I don't show them the whole scene. And actually as an assistant, I remember observing an exchange where my editor cut off the beginning of a long crane move. It was just taking too long. It's never going to make it in the movie, but the director was really offended. So, having seen that, it kind of planted the idea that you have to be careful. Of course, they worked it out, and of course, the scene was restored and of course, (laughs) it probably got cut later, but as an editor, you're always ahead of the director. That's your job: to be ahead.

Jeffrey Ford: The Russos (who directed Captain America: Civil War) and I work really well together because we have immense trust. I never have any doubts that they're not going to get me the best stuff, and they let me have a lot of space. And they let Matt (co-editor, Matthew Schmidt) and me have a lot of space and try different things. They're always up for new ideas. And their notes are excellent, they don't overwhelm. Their notes are very specific. They'll tell you when something's not working, and they'll let you know when it is working. That feedback and communication is really, really helpful because it allows me to know that I'm on the right track, and it allows us to really stretch. So the trust factor is key. Also, they just happen to be extremely, extremely good filmmakers. Their choices of shots, their taste in performance, their taste in music and the way they like to score things; their understanding of sound design and how you use sound in a movie is sophisticated, and it is something that I respond to. We have very similar taste. So Joe and Anthony talk as one. They really do sort of go back and forth and have a dialogue.

Hullfish: How does that collaborative relationship with the director begin for you, Steve?

Steven Mirkovich, Risen: When I work with a director, I have to gain their trust as quickly as possible. By the director's first weekend or day off, I try showing a cut of the first three or four days of that week's shoot, with music and sound effects. By gaining their confidence early on in the process, I find that directors allow me to freely bring my point of view. I'm doing my job if he's not thinking of editing or how his film is coming together while he's shooting.

Don't Edit the Way You Think the Director Wants

Lee Smith, Spectre: You can't second guess. I always cut what I like. I don't think about what anybody else likes. I have to do what I like. Because as soon as you think about "Well, what would the other person like?" you're dead. Because now you're no longer using your own in-built sense of rhythm and pacing and taste, and when I was editing in the early days, I quite often would make that mistake, and I'd be thinking, "Well, what's the director going to like?" As an editor, you're obviously making the movie with the director and you're pleasing the director. That's critically important, especially with a good director. I have had the good fortune of working with some of the great directors, and the simple nature of making the right decisions pleases them. But don't ever reverse engineer your thoughts. It's the same thing with saying, "What would the audience like?" It's a very dangerous game because if we all knew what the audience would like, it would be simple and every film would be a hit. You've got to try not to tailor your thoughts to anybody else's thought pattern. Not the studio, not the director, not the producer … you've just got to be faithful, and you'll succeed or fail simply based upon that.

Kelley Dixon: That's true. I constantly have to remind myself that I believe I have very good instincts, and I need to just do what I think. Really there's so much in this business that's placed in trust. You trust the D.P. to bring it. You trust actors to bring it. You're not wanting to tell them what to do. You have seen what they've done before, and you're saying, "I like what you have done, and I really want that on my show." They don't want to tell me how to edit. They've seen Breaking Bad, or Shameless, or Luck, The Walking Dead… or whatever I've done before, and they really like that. What I've found is that what people want to do is to hire you and forget about it. They want to be able to say, "I got the best person I could get for this job," and I'm gonna come in, and they're going to love it, right? And if they don't love it, they can know that they are in good hands because we can fix it. Once you start to realize that, you can rely on your instincts.

Working with new directors, on different series, or pilots, always makes me apprehensive. But it's a healthy motivation. I'm always going to wonder "Am I cutting this the way they want?" "Do they like close-ups all the time?" "Is it ok to sit in this shot for this long?" "Are they gonna want to see this character on this line even though the other coverage is so much better?" All that goes through your head constantly. And it makes things go slower until you can find a groove you're comfortable with and you let your instincts take over and just do what you do best. Honestly, if they really don't like what you're doing, they'll tell you. If you're waaaaaay off the mark, I suppose they could fire you. But if you let that stuff take over your thoughts, you'll do a crappy job anyway.

So I try to remember that instead of worrying about impressing directors and producers with what I think they might want, just do what I believe the project is dictating. Tell the best story. Give the characters the best chances to pull off how the script made me feel when I read it. I've found that most of the time, directors want you to do your thing. And if they had a different take or better idea, they'll tell you and you redo it. The cool ones will ask you what you think and actually listen to your ideas, for or against. Those are the collaborators. Those are the ones you want to work with (as opposed to for) over and over.

> "Go with your own intuition, or you're going to go down a bad path!"

Hullfish: You gotta go with your own intuition, or else you're going down a bad path!

Conrad Buff: (Laugh) Yeah, exactly, exactly! I remember when I was starting out, always worrying about, "God, what is the director going to like?" And finally, when I released myself from that bondage, of trying to anticipate what somebody would like, and going off what I like, that was quite freeing. It allowed me to just go down roads that I wanted to go without second-guessing someone, and it just made things stronger in every way.

TV's Collaborative Environment

We've already heard great advice from several TV editors because some of the elements of collaboration are the same whether cutting for the big screen or the small screen. This next section is about the specific dynamic of collaboration in the dramatic TV environment.

What makes this collaboration different? The role of the director and producer are very different between film and television. In TV, the director is brought in—under most circumstances—as almost a day-player. Their knowledge of the TV series' unique sensibilities may not be as well-informed as the editors'—who may have worked on a series for years—and is also subject to the over-riding opinion and direction of the showrunner or producers of the show. Because of this, the relationship with the director in TV is quite different than the relationship with the director in feature films. In TV, the showrunner is king, not the director.

Hullfish: Do you ever get into a scene and realize that the coverage or the performance isn't there?

> "Always have an eye out for things that might be missing."

Fabienne Bouville, Masters of Sex: During the shoot, I'm in touch with the director. Sometimes he or she will ask me whether, in a specific scene, I have enough; because they felt they couldn't get everything they wanted, maybe because they didn't have enough time. Generally, I always have an eye out for things that might be missing. Sometimes it happens that I don't have sufficient coverage to match the style of the show. On Masters of Sex, this came up once, so I walked over to the Sony lot and said to the director that I felt like there wasn't enough coverage for a specific portion of a scene. He asked to see a cut so I showed what I had to him, and he decided to pick up the scene for the extra coverage.

Hullfish: Collaborating with various directors on series—clearly the showrunner is the big dog, and directors come and go on series, generally speaking.

Kelley Dixon: On Breaking Bad and Better Call Saul, it's become a lot more familial. We began having a lot of the same directors as the Breaking Bad seasons went on. On Better Call Saul, there have been a few new people, but I actually haven't worked with anyone new yet. Pretty much on those shows, Vince Gilligan and Peter Gould are the guys all the directors are hoping to please. We don't really get much stuff where directors are going rogue and doing their own thing. Everyone wants to do our show. So no one really goes too much off book. There are tone meetings that I've heard last six hours or more. Vince and Peter are very interested in seeing directorial creativity, but they do want to make sure things are covered correctly and their intent is conveyed. So mostly I've had longer relationships with these directors. We've worked together a few times by now. They respect what I bring to the table as well. Many appreciate my thoughts on scene structure, juxtaposition, etc., even if it differs

from theirs. They don't always use it. But it seems they acknowledge the thought processes that went into it.

Hullfish: On a director's cut, how much time is dealing with their notes, and how much of it is someone sitting in the room with you, giving you firm direction constantly in person? Or is it based on the director?

Sidney Wolinsky: Totally dependent on the director. On some shows—The Sopranos—primarily, for the first four or five seasons, the directors lived in New York. We were cutting in LA, and I would get notes. I would send cuts to New York. I would get notes and send cuts back. Sometimes we'd literally be on the phone, and he'd press play, and I'd press play on my DVD player at home, and he'd talk through the show. It really depends. Some directors will come in and want to be there all the time: watch you do everything. Other directors come in and run the show and give you notes. Go away. Come back, look at the note fixes, ask to look at a few takes here and there, and go through that process a few times. Other directors will never come into the room even if they're in LA. So it's totally dependant on the director and how much work he wants to do. Some directors, I literally didn't get a note from. It really depends on them and how much they want to participate and how they want to participate.

Joe Mitacek, Grey's Anatomy: Generally, if it's someone I haven't worked with before, I'm going to meet them in the tone meeting or the read-through. I'll go and introduce myself. I might pop up during prep at some point, to say hello. Just to start a dialogue. I'm not going to force an idea on anyone. I usually like to pop down periodically and let the director know that everything's looking good. It's really putting him or her at ease … let them know everything is okay. If I'm concerned about something or I feel something's been missed, I might go down and just ask the director, "Did you have an idea for this section?" and they might say "We're planning on getting that close-up when we revisit the storyline later in this shooting schedule."—just clarifying what their plan is in a way that's not alarmist. And as we get closer, I might let him know, "It looks like we're going to be five minutes over." They'd say, "Is that normal?" I'd say, "Yeah that's about right." I would say for the most part directors come in saying, "You guys know the show better than anyone, so, if I'm off course, help steer me back." When we watch the editor's cut, I'm thinking, "Okay, here are some things I want to address" and that starts the dialogue. So, I might say, "Well, you know this storyline for Meredith—it's not just quite feeling like it shaped out. I think we need to help some earlier beats to make it so we really have a payoff here." Or maybe, just saying, "I feel like maybe this B-storyline just gets a little bit pushed to the side, so maybe we need to play the music a little more, give a little bit more

emphasis to add a little weight to it." So it's that kind of stuff. Shonda (showrunner, Shonda Rhimes) generally likes to have the entire episode as scripted laid out. So, what I suggest to the directors is "Let's not cut stuff. We'll just make our list of things we can cut and then, when the time is appropriate, I can pitch some ideas to her to cut." It's definitely a collaborative thing, and they have to come in and rely on the A.D. who's going to help them navigate. When notes come back from Shonda, I'm quick to let them know, "Don't worry. That's editorial stuff. She's happy with the episode, she likes what you shot, and this is just my stuff."

Hullfish: At the end of the director's cut, the one thing you don't do is cut for time, right? All those decisions about hitting your 42 minutes (or whatever the time is) are left for the producers or showrunner?

David Helfand, Great News: Right. I've gone back and forth over the years, dipping into the process and trying to think, "This is really long, maybe we should start proposing some cuts." Some directors will be inclined to try that, and that's all well and good. But I find a lot of veteran directors in particular don't feel the need to undertake that responsibility and just want to make sure the producers can see everything they need to make those decisions.

Patience is a virtue I've had to develop over the years because sometimes I'll see possible **lifts** or structural problems and be tempted to fix them. "I'll show them how smart I am." But if I fix them too soon, I'm denying others the opportunity to see the so-called problem I saw. They don't know it wasn't working because they never saw it not working. You have to pass that along, so they can also make those determinations. If you deny them that, it could bite you in the butt if they miss something that ends up back in the cut when maybe it doesn't need to. The timing of a suggestion is as important as the timing of a punchline.

> **Lift:** A line of dialogue or a beat in the script that can be lifted out or removed from the sequence.

Hullfish: I've talked to a couple of editors—Lee Smith and Kate Sanford of Boardwalk Empire—both of them talked to me about this issue of patience, which I personally struggle with. To me, it's kind of a matter of ego (in a bad way), where I believe "This line should go! We can jump into the scene at this point." I just want to chop it! But they—and you—point out that the director really needs that process of discovering that for themselves. They might come to the same conclusion, but they need to go through the process to come to that conclusion.

David Helfand: Part of the psychology of the editing room is trust and getting in sync with your collaborators. They trust your opinions, your decision-making and your problem-solving, so you really don't want to short-change their ability to participate. If there's something I think I can help—maybe take out a line or shift something around—I'll save it as a different version that I put away. If they perceive the same problem, then I immediately have a solution to offer. When you do that, you also have the benefit of earning their trust and confidence, and that's what builds long lasting relationships. You have to show people that you are capable and you can address things—but present it in the proper way.

Hullfish: I assume, from that answer, that you would agree that there are social, psychological and political aspects of surviving the edit suite?

David Helfand: That is probably at least half of being a successful editor.

Hullfish: That's how I feel.

David Helfand: It's one thing that I learned early on as an assistant working in one of the early videotape-based non-linear systems.

Hullfish: Montage?

> "It's really about learning how to operate with the people in the room, to ingest what they're saying."

David Helfand: Exactly. Montage. Early on in my career, there was a bad year when there were a bunch of industry strikes, and I was out of work, so I took a side job training at the Montage school. I clicked with an editor who came in for training, and he hired me for his pilot. Well into editing, he realized he wasn't proficient enough, so during the producer's cut he sat behind me with the producer and said, "You do it." And I had to learn how to work on the spot and recognized that it's more than just being able to operate a machine. It's really learning how to operate with the people in the room, to ingest what they're saying and multi-task and conceive under pressure. You have to develop a shorthand and strategize how you build trust while you're assembling.

That goes back to anticipating problems and not fixing them too soon. Presenting problems and solutions at the right time not only helps the process editorially, but helps people build confidence in you. It shows them that you're thinking ahead, making their lives easier because we're getting through things in a much more efficient

way. It's vital because of the need to provide some guidance and objectivity. That's tricky because you respect what they have done, but you also have to—at some level—disrespect what they have done enough to challenge it and provide a different perspective.

> "Presenting problems and solutions at the right time not only helps the process editorially, but helps people build confidence in you."

It's a delicate balance because you don't want to alienate someone who's very close to the material because they've been living with it for years. They've already made the whole project in their head, and you have to respect that while working through areas that maybe aren't coming across in the way that they intended.

And sometimes you pitch an idea, and it's wrong. You have to be willing to step back, and hopefully you're working in an environment where everyone feels that nothing is precious, because that's really the healthiest approach, where everything is up for grabs, and everyone can challenge everything and no one feels insulted.

Hullfish: Very true.

David Helfand: Trying to develop an attitude of understanding is especially vital when you're working with a big studio or network bureaucracy. You're dealing with a lot of people who have different agendas. Maybe they're coming at it from "How does this television show work in our world?" and they're not really thinking about the product in this specific episode, and their notes reflect that. Also, everyone thinks they can edit because it basically involves a choice of this or that, and it's very easy to have an opinion. It may not always be the right one, but people will think that, and so trying to respect everybody up and down the line is something that I've worked hard to do. It's very easy to dismiss network or studio notes that seem off base, irrelevant or ill informed. But I still use that as an advantage to see how something is being perceived. Even though I may disagree, I'm trying to understand the intent of the note as much as anything. People are reacting to something, and everyone's reaction is valid. Whether they have an agenda or a bad suggestion about how to fix it is questionable.

But the fact that they are commenting on something should make you think, "Why did they have that reaction?" Maybe the problem they're talking about exists earlier on, and they're responding to it four scenes too late. Deciphering notes is another skill that you really need to develop, and it's an art. It helps me survive a lot of situations by trying to embrace it rather than resist it. It's like a judo move where you take the

energy of whatever's being used against you and redirect it in a positive way instead of fighting it, even if it's coming from someone whose opinion you might not respect.

> "It's like a judo move where you take the energy of whatever's being used against you and redirect it in a positive way."

The next chapter of the book takes us from the world of scripted film and TV to the world of documentary. Many feature film editors have either built their skillset in the world of documentary or have successfully transposed their storytelling skills from features to documentary. But because of the unique demands of documentary editing, I have dedicated a chapter to the skills and methods of crafting the documentary.

Chapter 10
Documentary

Most of the techniques used by documentary editors are identical to the methodologies used by other editors, but documentary editors are a unique breed: crafting stories without scripts in many cases. Because their craft is similar but different, I have created a chapter dedicated to the art and craft of editing documentaries. As you may notice, many of the headings in this chapter reflect the topics in the previous chapters of the book. Like the interviewees in this chapter, I too spent a lot of time editing documentaries and working in various post-production roles in the genre, so this chapter is a bit of a homecoming for me. This chapter relies on five diverse documentary editors: Steve Audette, Paul Crowder, Andy Grieve, Paula Heredia and Craig Mellish. It should be noted that most of the "feature film" and "episodic TV" editors in this book also have solid résumés in documentary film editing.

Schedule

Hullfish: Andy, documentary films have very different schedules from one to another. What are some of the editing timelines you worked on?

Andy Grieve, Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief: The range is probably 6 months to 18 months. We Steal Secrets took about 18 months. The Scientology documentary took a little more than a year. And that's just me as the editor. On both of those, the assistant started a good three or four months before me, and before them were researchers who were trying to pull together the archival. It could easily be two years from the first interview till someone gets to see it at a festival or whatever. At film festivals, people always ask, "What was the budget?" I heard a guy who had the greatest line: "This cost me five years of my life." Which I think is the perfect answer. It's a labor of love, by definition.

Image 10.1 Steve Audette looking over circled scenes in script to determine which are too long.

Hullfish: What was the schedule of shooting this and editing on your latest film, Paula?

Paula Heredia, Toucan Nation: My main photography happened through six months. Then the last eight months I probably did five more shoots. But the balance between shooting and editing shifted. The first six months was mostly shooting and some editing. Then the last months I switched to mostly editing, and as I discovered things that I needed or new developments were happening, I would go back to shoot.

Steve Audette, Frontline: Our goal is to cut 10 polished minutes a week. Most weeks we do better than that. So a 52-minute show can be cut in 5 weeks. But I've banged out a great 2-hour film in 6 weeks. Early in week 6, we show the rough cut to the executive team. Then there is a week to 10 days to address those notes. Then we show it again as a fine cut. After that the sequence gets locked with a final writing session.

Hullfish: Paul, tell me about the process of cutting Eight Days and the schedule and how you organized it. I'm assuming you were cutting on Avid?

Image 10.2 Paul Crowder's edit suite.

Paul Crowder, The Beatles: Eight Days a Week—The Touring Years: We were cutting in Avid. I have a system in an office at home. That was the best part of the process. Just to sit and have to sift through Beatles footage is great fun. There are some great moments, but it's quite a daunting prospect when you get your first batch of stuff, and then you get your second batch, which has more than the first batch you've just watched, then the third batch is about as big again and it just keeps coming. How do we pick? What do we do? My assistant, Jamie Bolton, who was absolutely brilliant, was constantly on the machine looking for stuff. I don't know if he has the luck or whether he's just better at it—probably the latter—but he kept finding the gold on his machine. He would just make lots of bins of stuff to use, good soundbites, good moments, so we knew what we had as far as our support for any of the stories we want to tell and sometimes write our stories to those moments. So it was just a long process of about four or five months of just going through everything that had been given to us and selecting the best stuff, trying to figure out with some of it, "Will we ever find a master?" There're a couple of moments in the film actually where we couldn't find masters, and all we had was a VHS copy, but I thought the moments were so important that we should keep them, and we presented them in the manner that they are.

Approaching the Material

Hullfish: Steve, on a Frontline documentary project, where does the editing process begin?

Steve Audette: While the interviews are getting shot, an associate producer and production assistant are looking for documents, footage and photographs that might pertain to the story. They're building a giant file database on a **RAID** that is divided into photographs, documents and video clips. We use Adobe Bridge to view and search for photographs and documents and the clips are automatically imported into the Media Composer when the edit room opens. When I come in on the first day, my assistant

editor, Elliott Choi, has transcoded all of the media. He links to the media via AMA and then transcodes to the Avid ISIS. Our shooting ratio is something like 200:1. Most of the documentary content is edited from those ScriptSynced bins, not regular bins. My assistant breaks the project down into folders for interviews, stock footage, audio, graphics and some utility folders. Every project starts out looking the same. Inside the folder for interviews, there's a folder for every interview. Non-interview footage for scenes is segregated to bins. For example, all shots of the White House are sub-clipped into one bin. Audio headlines of news reports are gathered into bins for important moments in the narrative based on the subject. On the first day of the edit, the director will deliver the first 5 pages. (For a 2-hour show, the final script is about 82 pages.)

RAID (Redundant Array of Independent Disks): A high volume storage device that provides fast throughput and some degree of safety against drive failure.

Hullfish: Andy, let's discuss your organizational approach. What keeps you from going crazy with options?

Andy Grieve: I'll watch the interview, and I'll literally just cut out the questions and the dead air and end up with a sequence that's just the best parts of the interview, and from there I'll do further cuts where I'll organize this person or that person talking about this subject or that subject so that you end up with organized clips of different characters and their own telling of the stories and then from there I'll start to weave those together. Only when I'm much further down the line will I go into the archival stuff. Because so much of the documentary process is writing the script in the edit, there's not much point for me to flesh out the story with imagery and everything until you know how a story will be used in the whole film. From there, you can start putting in music and worry about pacing and decide whether this is going to be at the beginning of the film or the end of the film. It isn't really obvious that a specific story would start the film, but it actually ends up a lot later, so then it needs to be paced differently and have different archival stuff in it because it has a different function in the larger story.

Hullfish: That's exactly my approach as well. Creating selects reels of tightened, cleaned-up interviews that are organized by thoughts/storylines and then using those selects reels as the source material.

> "Make a bunch of little 'modules,' the biggest trick is to compartmentalize."

Andy Grieve: I'll make a bunch of little "modules" or scenes that I start to piece together into the overall story. It's like a bunch of little short films that have their own beginnings and ends—or don't. The trick is then how to trace a thread through all your little pieces, but for me, the biggest trick is to compartmentalize so I don't lose my mind. I can't think of it like "There're 300 hours of footage" because I'd just quit.

Hullfish: How are you organizing these selects reels you've got?

Andy Grieve: I keep a master interview selects reel for each interview. The interviews are organized in the timeline by subject with locators separating them. Some editors, I've seen, end up with a ton of sequences, but that would overwhelm me. I'd rather have a few longer sequences than more shorter ones.

Hullfish: And how are you going into those longer sequences to find the specific items you are looking for?

Andy Grieve: After I pull my selects, I'll have my assistant go in and put a locator at the head of each clip and sometimes even in the middle of the clip and put in the first few words of the sentence or the key words so we can search through locators within the sequences. And the last film I worked on was a little different. There were only 8 key interviews. Then on We Steal Secrets, about WikiLeaks, there were 35 interviews and a lot more footage, so that was a little trickier organizationally. Then I did a film about the OJ Simpson car chase that was entirely archival footage, so that had no interviews at all, so that was a completely different process. You have to approach each film separately. The OJ Simpson thing was about one day in sports with the car chase and all of these sports things that took place on that day that kind of wove through that. On that we ended up mapping out a 24-hour timeline of all the best footage we had from that day, so it ended up being a time-of-day timeline on different layers so that we could see when things were overlapping. So that was a little different … almost like detective work. Each project has its own little challenges and idiosyncrasies so you have to adapt to that.

Hullfish: Craig, you're cutting for Ken Burns; what's the post-process like at Florentine Films?

Craig Mellish, National Parks: America's Best Idea: Before post we've had a team searching still photographs and any archival film. That process is a year or more. In

the case of National Parks, we had almost three years, mostly so we could film at all the parks without killing ourselves with travel, but also to be able to film in all different seasons. After we've collected the footage, we'll log it and then load it into Avid. The stills we organize into a FileMaker database that we can search. Then we take the still and animate it in a third-party program called Moving Picture, then import the Quicktime it spits out into Avid.

Hullfish: How much of the archive material is in your head, or are you relying much more on FileMaker?

Craig Mellish: Obviously the people who collected the material are going to know it the most intimately. On Vietnam, we had around 12,000 images to deal with, and Parks was probably similar. A search might come up with 900 choices. I page through it and find the shot I'm looking for. Sometimes I'll narrow the search, but usually I don't mind going through a bunch. I'm actually a frustrated photographer so I like looking through these great old photos anyway.

Image 10.3 Craig Mellish, screening with Ken Burns and some of the team at Florentine Films.

Hullfish: And how is the Avid project organized?

Craig Mellish: We copy over the folder structure from the previous film and then tailor it to fit the project we're working on. Usually, at the top, it's "Rough Cuts." Then bins for my cuts—past and present—stills, sound effects, motion effects, lifts, music I might be playing with that's not part of the main library. Then interviews. We probably interviewed a hundred people for this project. In the case of Vietnam, they were broken down into English interviews and Vietnamese interviews. Then we have a narration folder with bins for both Ken Burns' temp narration and then our final narration tracks. Then we'll have a voice-over bin for our voices, then subfolders for selects and for all takes. Then we have a bin of ScriptSync scripts.

> “Organization is key to being able to find things fast.”

Hullfish: Paula, what are you doing to organize the material that is helping you find what you need to tell a story?

Paula Heredia: I ended up with at least 500 hours of material. That’s very common in the kind of films that I make or edit, and so organization is key to organize my own thoughts and being able to find things fast. Usually, I am shooting a story with scenes shot on different days. So for example the scene of Grecia (the toucan) eating. We might have shot this at different times. So all of that material that comes from different days goes to a folder that’s called “Grecia eating,” and I make sequences for each scene, so my first step with all of the material is to go through a process of first selects, which are sequences that are just the best of the material in a clean way, and then I do my second selects, which is a sequence that is a little more formed: I treat that material as if the whole film was that scene—so you can play it, you can feel it. Those sequences become my basket when I begin editing. By the time I start editing, I know the potential of each of the scenes and the topics that have emerged and that can best be conveyed with that particular scene. So when I start building a story, I begin grabbing from those sequences.

Hullfish: What is your process when dealing with interviews?

Paula Heredia: When you are doing a documentary with more formal interviews, the director and I take those interviews, and we mark selects on paper or digital. Those selects are subclipped, and those subclips go into a bin that has columns, which will get codes. We begin codifying the selects. So when I am searching for a code, I can sift and bring to my timeline everybody that talks about anything I need. I can immediately see everything that I have in terms of content, besides vérité. So when I’m building my next stage of that scene, I can begin weaving both elements.

Hullfish: Tell us about the codification of the subclips you talked about.

Image 10.4 Paula Heredia at her Avid.

Paula Heredia: For example, in Toucan Nation we have an interview with someone, and we would codify the sound-bites as "popular movement, the law, the beak, technology, philosophy." Those are kind of general topics, codes, but in a paragraph that's talking about technology, they might also talk about 3D printing, so I make another code. Eventually, you begin merging and simplifying the codification. Usually, it starts a little loose, and then it gets a little tighter, and that's where the assistant editor plays a great role in cleaning up the codification. But in terms of the director and the editor codifying, we try to be disciplined and as clear as possible, and then as the process continues, you keep cleaning the codes. But if you have a subclip and you have four or five columns—code 1, 2, 3, 4, 5—and I make the selects and I have put two or three codes, I can just add them in those columns. Then, on the side, I have a list of all of the codes that we have assigned.

Hullfish: I use an almost identical methodology. But it's somewhat tricky when you are first trying to identify those codes, because unless you shot the footage, you don't know necessarily what all of the topics or subjects or ideas are going to be. Paul, how were you organizing that stuff? By scene or topic or story?

Paul Crowder: We put everything into events. There was a company that actually started compiling all of this media called OVOW ONE VOICE. Stuart Samuels and Matthew White at that company had done an extensive project of compiling media and footage, so that was the first stuff that we got. They had organized it into events, from October 1963 onwards. So each day was an event because they were filmed every day. So we then whittled those events down to the shows, so that every time there was a show, what we had from that day—any footage, photographs, sound from that day—was in an event folder. Everything was piled into folders, 63, 64, 65 and 66, and then organized by month and then by each day. So every time we went to an event, "We want to be here and talk about this," we were able to take a look at the au-

thentic footage from the day as much as we can. We had to take some artistic license here and there, especially in the studio with what we actually had and when it was actually taken. There are some “Rubber Soul” and “Revolver” photographs where they’re intertwined. But they tell the story. They visually connect. They visually make sense, so it’s a little artistic license, but you’re within a few months. Then we’ve got that to go to for everything.

> “Narration is your friend, but it’s very easy to over-write when using narration.”

Hullfish: Steve, after organizing, where do you go?

Steve Audette: At that point, I start building a sequence. It includes narration, because, at Frontline, we are big believers that narration is your friend. However, it’s very easy to overwrite when using narration, so we do “haiku narration.” Narration is used to deliver a context or a connection for the audience and then get out of the way so the story can unfold.

We’ll record scratch and start cutting sync bites and narration. We do that really quickly, just to get a sense of “Does any of this really work?” You really have to watch them say it, to get a real sense of how good that sound-bite is. Also, interviews are shot with two cameras: wide and tight. The wide shot is really pretty wide. It’s handy when someone uses his or her hands to talk. Also, cutting between these two shots helps to truncate and tighten interviews.

We quickly assemble the day’s script and watch it … figure out when it’s boring and trim it down a little bit. “What’s this going to look like? How does it start?” So in League of Denial, we know we’re starting in Pittsburgh. How can we bring people to Pittsburgh? We think that’s an important thing. As soon as you possibly can, help people know exactly where you are, what time it is and what kind of place it is. So we created a juxtaposition of imagery between the steel mill with the audio from the commentators talking about players on the field and the great Pittsburgh teams. It’s very clear that you’re looking at steel-working footage, but you’re hearing this audio of a football game and that creates a dichotomy of interest. It pulls the viewer into the story. They discover their own connection and that creates an engaged audience.

Hullfish: There are editors that like to rip through an edit as quickly as possible and then go back and fine cut later and others that fine cut from the start. Which camp are you in?

Steve Audette: I'm always fine cutting. Editors understand the story no matter what state it's in, but almost everybody else needs to see a fine cut.

Hullfish: With docs, I tend to build what I call "the bones" of the film first.

> "I want to know a film's rhythms, and you can only really find that out by cutting scenes."

Steve Audette: I'm not a big fan of stringing out a whole film. I want to know its rhythms, and you can only really find that out by cutting scenes. I also really like to cut from the start. The hardest scenes to cut are the beginning and the end of a documentary. Like with books, the first 15 pages have to capture your interest. The same holds true for docs.

Hullfish: Since you start with the scene, what's your approach?

Audette: Generally speaking, a Frontline scene starts with narration. Very short: 20 words, 12 or 13 is probably perfect. Even if I assemble an edit that's just narration and sound-bites, I don't much watch it: I listen to it so I don't have to think about how ugly it is. The next thing we do is say "What are we going to show and what are the atmospheric sounds?" We start building the interest level visually and aurally. I try to clean up sound-bites as much as I can without sounding false.

Hullfish: Andy, what's your approach to the vast sea of material that you have to draw from?

Andy Grieve: The approach depends on whether it's a "talking heads and archival film" or is it an archival film or is it a vérité film? I've edited all of those styles, so it's kind of different for each film, but my general process is that I like to watch everything before I start cutting. I can't really cut and screen at the same time. I like to watch and absorb things and not really make choices at the beginning. It's all a process of compartmentalizing information, so as not to get completely overwhelmed.

Hullfish: How much do you depend on being able to memorize a huge volume of sound-bites and visuals as you edit?

Andy Grieve: I do not try to memorize. I take notes either on notecards that go on the wall or in locators in the Avid.

Hullfish: If you build a cut primarily with the interviews, when do you go back and add b-roll and archival? Do you add that in a layer or layers on tracks above the interviews, or do you try to keep everything on a single track when possible?

Andy Grieve: I always work in multiple tracks for organizational reasons and also because sometimes I have multiple options stacked on different tracks, like if I am debating about using one image over another, this shot versus that shot, I will leave them all in the timeline on different tracks.

Hullfish: What's the process for most of these Ken Burns documentaries that you've worked on, Craig?

> "We start Day One with the music, so it grows organically with the cut and becomes integral."

Craig Mellish: When we begin a project, we'll have a general understanding of what stories we're going to be covering in terms of the subject. So we just go out and begin gathering material: archival photographs and footage, a bunch of period-appropriate music and, in the case of National Parks, live footage. Usually, this process is done before we have a script. I started working on the Parks series in April of 2003 as a producer out on the road: scouting the parks. I'd also poke around the park's archives to get a sense of what they had. I might "pre-screen" some of the people we'd interview on camera. We didn't start editing on that project till 2006. So there was a three-year lead-up to editing, and we shot the majority of our footage during that time with the exception of aerials which we laid in late because of their cost. We typically don't shoot to the script. But there were exceptions for recreations. We also start Day One with the music that's going to be in the film. So it sort of grows organically with the cut and becomes integral.

Hullfish: How are you breaking down these episodes into more workable chunks?

Craig Mellish: Well, usually we have a script that we follow just like any dramatic film. It's made up of "chapters," which relate to the interstitial titles that Ken's films are known for. And then each chapter will have multiple scenes within it.

Craig Mellish: For our next series, Country Music, we just did what we call our blind assembly. Dayton Duncan has written eight episodes for this project, and some, not all, are four to four and a half hours long. We cut those down to about two hours.

Hullfish: Is the blind assembly just a radio cut with no supporting visuals?

Craig Mellish: Yes. We screen with just the talking heads and the narration and any voices that there might be.

Hullfish: So, a four hour radio cut has to get down to two hours. What are some of the decision-making processes in that cutdown?

Craig Mellish: The scripts come in very heavily detailed. We call it "getting into the weeds." So we trim the "weeds." The bulk of that trimming is that we'll have 15 people telling the same story, and we're ultimately choosing the person or persons who tell that story best and removing the others.

Hullfish: For me, the choice of whom to use is: "Who tells it the most succinctly or who tells with the most passion?" Getting in and out of scenes is a difficulty for many editors. How do you approach that, Craig?

Craig Mellish: Sometimes you see a shot and you think, "This is the perfect starting shot. It really sets the table." Even when using still photographs for a scene I still want to have an establishing shot. And then same with an ending shot. Chances are it might be on screen a little longer because you're resolving the music or fading out, and you want that image to have maximum impact. The search for the perfect photograph is one of the most enjoyable parts of the process for me. But unlike the music, which I can sometimes leave out until I'm happy with a tune, the images need to go in. So sometimes you have to live with shots that you may not love. Maybe it's too illustrative or too on-the-nose. It's not conveying the mood that you're looking for, but it's all you have at the moment so accept it. But I'll always be looking. I think, "If I get the chance, I'm going to get rid of this shot. It doesn't do what I want it to do. It's just lying there, not doing anything for me."

Hullfish: Paul, let's talk about visuals. At the beginning of Eight Days, the still photos are not treated at all. There's no movement. They're presented in whatever aspect ratio they were shot. Transitions were all simple cuts, fairly rapid. Then later in the film, there are some treatments of stills that are much more involved. From simple pushes—or I call them floats … very slow creep in's—but there was also real cigarette smoke rising from the still photo of a Beatle smoking, and there were some of those 3D faked moves on stills.

Paul Crowder: It's really difficult to figure out what to do with photographs that hasn't already been done. The 3D thing's been done to death now and so I shied away from it. I just wanted to see the image and let every part of the image tell us what it needs to tell us.

Hullfish: Uninflected by movement.

Paul Crowder: And if I'm going to do a move, I'm just going to push in really slightly. It's going to be very subtle. Just a little push in to give us a tiny bit of movement. So that was for the early part of the film. Then when we got to the studio, we felt like we needed to create a little more life in the studio section, so we started to treat some of the photographs in that manner. And we didn't do all of them, but just certain sections where we did the 3D thing, and it was just to bring the studio to life a little bit more. There's a tiny, tiny bit in the opening. There's a little cigarette smoke on a couple of things and a tiny bit of 3D going on in those as well, but the rest of it was held off.

Hullfish: Did you use selects reels? How did you keep from getting overwhelmed with material, or did you just stay in a scene and limit your vision to that scene?

Paul Crowder: That's the thing: to avoid getting overwhelmed. I learned this a long, long time ago because you end up feeling like you're at the bottom of Mount Everest every day looking up, thinking, "How am I going to get to the top of this thing?" You have to focus on, "Where am I? What scene am I in and what do I have to support it?" Let's just stay here. Then when you're building that scene and you find, "I don't have very much that I can use here. So what do I have around it? Let's look at a couple of days around it. What have we got? … Still struggling … I need them getting off a plane. I need them in a room. I need Ringo looking pissed off. I need something." So then you go delve the next bit further, and you look at what else you have in your resources. So the idea is just to keep yourself focused on the job at hand and stay focused in that moment. "We're going from here to here, and that's all I have to worry about. I just have to worry about the footage that supports this." And then there's, "Oh! I found this! Where can we put this?" And I'd send it to Mark, I'd send it to Ron, and say, "Let's find a place for it. We can't put it there, and we can't put it there." Then someone has the epiphany, "We could put it there!" I have this bin called "Hip Pocket," and I just put all these things in the "Hip Pocket" bin.

Hullfish: (Laughs) I am so stealing that! I'm creating a "Hip Pocket" bin on my next project! I've got a friend that has a bin called "Junk in the Trunk," but that's kind of the opposite of the "Hip Pocket" bin.

Paul Crowder: I constantly go through it to remind myself, "Oh Crikey, I've got to find a place for this!" I depressingly went through it the other day, and it was like, "Oh man, I never found a place for that or that or that."

Scriptsync

Hullfish: Steve, you've been one of the major proponents of ScriptSync in documentaries. Lots of people have seen your tutorials, and I've seen you give several talks on your use of ScriptSync.

Steve Audette: Every interview, important speech or event that is part of the narrative is transcribed and the media is ScriptSynced. Most of the documentary content is edited from those ScriptSynced bins. Not footage bins.

Paul Crowder: I could not have done Eight Days a Week without ScriptSync.

There's no substitute for Avid. It's the Porsche of editing. We could not have done this on any other system. I know the other systems can handle it, but not in this manner. I don't have to worry about anything. I'm just working and we're cutting it together and it's all fine.

Hullfish: You used ScriptSync for the interviews?

Image 10.5 Steve Audette working on a Frontline about the NFL concussion issue.

Paul Crowder: No, for everything. Everything. Any dialogue at all we had transcribed and ScriptSynced. So I could go search words. I could search for whatever I needed. We had a whole bin of just ScriptSync scripts. We would get archive interviews and transcribe them and ScriptSync them. That's why I stayed in MC7. I never went up to 8 because they dropped the license in 8 (ScriptSync returned in Spring 2017). There's no way I could have done this without it.

Hullfish: I just finished cutting a documentary two weeks ago myself, and I was cutting in the latest version of Media Composer, but I was on Nexis shared storage and I

had an old version 6 Symphony system hanging off of it that we used for nothing except ScriptSync and PhraseFind. When we wanted a word or phrase, you'd hop on the Symphony, do the search and locate the exact moment you wanted, then you'd have to go back to your current editing system to cut it in. So it was a bit of a pain, but it allowed us to stay current and still have the amazing PhraseFind and ScriptSync functionality. I'm so happy ScriptSync is back.

Paul Crowder: So having access to it on your editing systems saves you a step of course, since it will call that up directly into your source window ready to go. It's genius. I don't know how people make it without. I mean I did. It used to drive me nuts. You'd get a timecode where a sound-bite was supposed to be, and it wasn't there, and you'd have to literally watch an hour interview to find one bite and it would always be at the end. Or somehow you miss it and have to watch it again. It really helps because I could remember things that existed, but I couldn't remember where I put it or which year it was. So instead of having to go through it all, you put it in ScriptSync and boom! It's there.

Craig Mellish: We just mixed one of my episodes for Vietnam, and for a particular interview we were wondering, "Did he say the word 'fire' anywhere else?" Because, in this instance, the talking head is running the word together with the next word but we're looking for a way to cleanly end the sentence.

Hullfish: So you do a search for "fire" with a period at the end.

Craig Mellish: Exactly. As a dialogue editor on some of our films, ScriptSync is unbelievably helpful. Then we have a music bin, which has all our soundtrack stuff from the various sources of music we're using. Sometimes broken down by artist or year. Next, come folders and bins for stock footage. In this case, broken down into many individual subject bins. Like with the stills, I spend most of my time searching the wider, All Footage bins so I get a bigger picture of what we have. Then, we have a live footage folder and bins. On Vietnam, it's down near the bottom because we didn't have a whole lot, but on National Parks, it's more up towards the top. Then sound effects and some bins of technical stuff.

Shot Selection

Hullfish: On Oprah—which I cut for a decade—there was always care taken in only showing the "talking head" for a reason, not just because you didn't have anything better to cut to. The purpose of cutting to a talking head was to show a moment of personal revelation or emotion. Also, a real close-up was usually saved for an emotional or revelatory moment. Eddie Hamilton's opinion is that the audience will forget critical dialogue if it isn't played on the speaker.

> "The purpose of cutting to a talking head is to show a moment of personal revelation or emotion."

Steve Audette: I think that's very true. I tend to use the on-camera shot at the end of a sound-bite and use the cut to the next image as the "period" in their statement, whether that includes a pause before I cut away or whether I cut immediately.

Hullfish: I agree. Almost always the most critical thing is to see them at the end. What about the idea that close-ups are saved for important moments?

Steve Audette: I want to be close to see facial expressions. I like to think like you're in a salon of really smart people. How big is the frame of a person if you're sitting in their salon, listening to their discussion or to someone tell a story?

Hullfish: I feel like the super-tight close-up is too much emotionally for the basic information you get in most headshots. Unless it's really an emotional moment, the big, big close-up feels false to me. It's too intimate. That's similar to your salon example. If you're sitting a comfortable social distance from even a close friend, you're just not that intimately close.

Steve Audette: I agree with that. But I'm so interested in the facial expressions of my characters that I'm more inclined to go to the close-up than the wide.

Hullfish: But in the two docs I watched, you use that wide quite a bit.

Steve Audette: I use it for body language. For TV I think it's important to give people an opportunity to see the emotional content that is in the face. If it's in the rest of the body, I go wide.

Hullfish: One of those things that I think documentary editors struggle with is visualizing parts of the script. How do you know you have the right photo or piece of

footage when you've got a thousand?

Craig Mellish: Your job is to decide that you have the right one. Sometimes I see people, editors that have several images stacked on top of each other, and I'll ask why. They say, "Well, it's because I have all these alternatives." And I'll think, "There is no alternative; there's just the one shot." That's how I feel. You are an editor. You have to make that choice. I feel confident that this is the best shot. I'm not going to stack three or four shots on top of each other because this is the shot, and it's my job to decide that this is the shot. Ken can't look through the 15,000 shots so he has to trust that his editors are providing him with the perfect shot for that moment.

Hullfish: What is the issue when you get that choice wrong?

Craig Mellish: It's usually that I'm reading things one way, and Ken's reading it another way.

Hullfish: What about being too "on the nose" and giving an audience a chance to read their own thoughts into an image?

Craig Mellish: In our film on the Dust Bowl, I had a scene where one of our talking heads, who was a child during those times, was telling the story of a time her father and some men had to put down their cattle herd because they had no way to feed them. I had a shot of a man who appeared to be shooting a cow that I could have used, but instead we used a shot of a small child hanging on to a barbed wire fence and looking sad, as if it were our interviewee. And I think it made the scene much more powerful to see it, in a sense through the eyes of a child.

Hullfish: How do you allow the viewer to "inhabit a photograph"?

Craig Mellish: God is in the details. You can show details of a bigger shot and then boom, you deliver the wide. Reveal what you want. I don't want to make the same film each time. Editing-wise I don't want to fall into: "Here's a new scene. I start with this, then music starts, then I bring in the voice …" I'm trying to find a different way. Hopefully, I'm not repeating myself. One thing that I did differently in Vietnam and I'm probably not going to do it so much on Country Music is that I left the talking heads on screen, not saying anything for long periods of time. When they were thinking about their answers. For some reason, it really works. You're really drawn in during their pauses. I think it was because they weren't being didactic or searching for the "right" answer. They were experiencing the story again after 50 years, and you could see that in their eyes. In those moments, the pauses were really effective,

whereas in other instances, it's more like "Maybe they're spinning their wheels. Tighten it up. Let's help them get to the point. Let's move this along."

Pacing and Rhythm

Hullfish: What dictates the speed or rhythm of your cuts, Steve?

Steve Audette: They're based on the rhythms of the voices. The cuts are based on the pacing of the delivery, though you can stay on a beautiful shot longer. Frequently, to extend my ability to stay on a shot, I will do what I call an Avid push, zooming in anywhere between 10 and 30%. I'll do that on interviews if I think a guy's talking too long on camera.

Hullfish: Craig, sometimes in a documentary, you just need a break from facts and information for a moment.

Craig Mellish: In Vietnam we have a character who is sort of the All-American kid who goes to Vietnam and wants to fight for his country. We follow him for two episodes and, like many other young guys, he is killed in battle. When that happens in our story, it's in the middle of the episode, so we have to figure out the proper amount of time to let people catch their breath because it is very emotional. You obviously just can't roll on to the next story, but you also can't make it so long that you lose the thread of the film. So you have to find the balancing point of "Where have we mourned enough and when are we ready to move to the next story?"

Image 10.6 Ken Burns mixing a documentary. Photo by Craig Mellish.

Hullfish: I just rewatched Dogtown and Z-Boys, Paul, and one of the things I loved was the pacing and the musicality of the editing. There are moments of pure punk madness and then you've got this dreamy, slow sequence with Pink Floyd's "Us and Them" under it. Everything slows down, and it gives you this chance to breathe. Talk

to me about how your music background may have played a part in that. You came to the US and L.A. as a drummer in a band.

Paul Crowder: Stacy (director, Stacy Peralta) came with a selection of songs and basically said, "This is the soundtrack we were listening to. We listened to all these records. This was the stuff that was important to us and inspired us to skate in the way that we did." And then Glen Friedman, who was one of the photographers, a younger photographer at the time, and a brilliant and prolific photographer today, he was also very musical and helped us go through all of the selections and songs we should use and the stuff that was really the pinnacle ones. So now we have this nice canvas of music that we get to pick from. We had no budget. We were a $400,000 film so we were really just going to pop them in and realize we wouldn't be able to get any of these (license them legally), but we figured, "Let's make the film we want to make." Really it was just three of us in the room, Stacy (producer), Agi Orsi and myself, just making all of the decisions with no money guys, and I think the film kind of has that freedom because of that. They were a punkish movement. They came in that era. So the brashness of it, the Super 8mm film that was all shot in pieces and was old and destroyed and repaired and looked messy and scratched up … lots of flash-frames and things like that.

The photographs that were very raw and the way Stacy chose to shoot them gave us all this manic information visually, naturally. It was already manic naturally before I even laid my hands on it. It had this vibe already. And then, when you start picking the music and start pounding and moving very fast, and you've got to give yourself time to breathe. So it was very much structured like that to be able to power down the hill and fly through the swimming pools, then just for a moment admire the beauty of it all because that's the other side. It's very balletic; it's very graceful amongst all this, what they're really doing. And at times, the body movements and the swishes, you want to be able to enjoy them as opposed to having them thrown at you, which was also enjoyable. It was all thought out to give the viewer that chance, "Let's give them a chance to breathe. Let's give them a chance to change pace and let's juxtaposition the music we're using." Not only were we slamming our head to Aerosmith and punk rock and hard rock, we're also listening to Pink Floyd. We're also listening to Neil Young and other music that's more mellow. So it was all about creating their world and at the same time creating a pace for the film that allowed the viewer to enjoy the next really hard, powerful, rock 'n' roll, in-your-face moment, because they've had a chance to breathe and take a step back. The film made itself. We watched the film when we had a structure and said, "OK, these three things move," and we were literally done. I've never made a film quite like it since.

Structure

Hullfish: Paula, you have told me that you first build scenes, then build the documentary from scenes. How do you determine the structure of putting together the scenes?

Paula Heredia: Sometimes you want to do it chronologically, sometimes you want to start from the middle and move backward. You have to apply it to the specific concept and idea you have for telling that particular story.

Hullfish: There're all kinds of structures for telling a story. How did you settle on the structure for Toucan Nation?

Paula Heredia: There are aspects of the toucan story that needed to be told in a chronological way because the story of the toucan is that he has a beak, then he doesn't have a beak and then he has a beak again. So there is an aspect of the story that there's no other way to tell other than chronologically. But when you build a structure for an audience that is having a complex experience, not just a one-stream story, then you bring in other elements. I start the film with the impact that this bird had in the country by mobilizing the citizens to ask for laws to protect animals. So the opening scene of the film is a large demonstration in Costa Rica asking for that. After that, I cut back to what's going on with the bird. I develop the stories of the scientists. I develop the story of all the challenges that they had to go through to figure out what to do, and I'm going back and forth and taking a look at what's going on with the bird.

Hullfish: A lot of the success of this working is how different information is revealed and parceled out to the audience.

Paula Heredia: … and when.

> "When it's time to go to another arc is defined by some elements that are rational and other elements that are irrational."

Hullfish: And when. So let's talk about "when" a little bit. What decisions were made in determining the exact moment to branch away from the central story to tell a substory?

Paula Heredia: I go back to my own experience. I am my own audience. I react to my edit based on when I feel that it's time to go to another arc. That feeling is defined by some elements that are rational and other elements that are irrational. Rational rea-

sons are related to “Oh, I haven’t seen the bird for a while. It’s time to know what’s going on there.” But there are also irrational and emotional needs, for example, “I am in a low moment and I need to bring this up.” Or I need to make the audience feel something else. When that moment needs to happen is something that I, as a director and editor, feel in my stomach.

Hullfish: The idea of ebbing and flowing and low moments and trying to go brighter —that’s a very musical sense, I think.

Paula Heredia: You’re right because it’s all about pacing. How long do you leave a scene playing or a storyline playing? It’s all about rhythm. You find, sometimes, films that are good films, but they are fat because there was a moment in which you made your point and you gave me everything and you were too in love with something that you put in that doesn’t respond to the pacing that was needed. So there’s this arc and you’re breathing and you say, “I need to inhale now because I’ve already exhaled.”

Hullfish: With many of the films you do, you don’t need to worry about hitting an exact show time, but on Toucan Nation, this is broadcast in the US, so you need to hit a specific time, right? Do you just tell the story you want to tell and now you have something that is an hour and 15 minutes or 2 and a half hours? Then comes the painful process of trimming it down.

Paula Heredia: It’s an interesting challenge: how do you squeeze it to just get the essence? And sometimes, hopefully, if you do a good job, it makes it better because it obliges you to think harder about how not to lose the essence of the story as you have to trim it down. Sometimes it’s not good for the film, but sometimes you can make it good.

Hullfish: Were there any specific decisions about getting Toucan Nation down to time?

> “You keep shaping and shaping and shaping.”

Paula Heredia: I can’t remember. Maybe because I hate to remember the things I don’t like. It is like fine surgery. Sometimes it’s as easy as pulling a whole scene, but most of the time it’s not like that. You go to a scene and take one line here, 10 frames there. It’s just about trimming just a little so you don’t lose anything important. You just take fat, and the fat might be very, very thin, but you keep shaping and shaping and shaping.

Hullfish: Do you remember how long the first assembly of Toucan Nation was?

Paula Heredia: It probably was an hour and a half and needed to get down to 42 minutes. I have a special relationship with my executive producer. I trust his creative instincts, and I share my process with him. So when I do the first cut, I do it long intentionally because there are things that I want to show to him, and I want it to become a conversation. There will be many things that will not be playing like they should or are longer than they should be. But my intention is that he is aware of the material that I have so that later I can go back to him and say, "Maybe I should bring back 'x' or 'y' material that he has seen in the first cut." So the first hour and a half version is not necessarily the version that I want to have.

Hullfish: Paul, what about you? How was the film's structure developed?

Paul Crowder: It evolved constantly, but it starts on paper. Mark Monroe, who's been my business partner since 2006 and who I've been working with since 1998 doing VH-1 Behind the Music. He's written all of the films I've done, apart from the two I did with Stacy. So it starts with him. We gather our interviews: all the talking heads that we want to include that we have in our resources. Obviously, the tricky thing is that you want to balance the four Beatles. You want to hear from the four of them and obviously, having two still with us and two who have passed, you are limited in how many interviews there are with George Harrison and John Lennon, and you're certainly limited in how much of that has never been heard. There are a lot of people that have heard it all. I think we found a couple of interviews that are much rarer and that people may not have seen. That will help those who are very well versed in The Beatles' story and archives. Mark Monroe would just lay out a structure of bites. We all talked about it.

We had plenty of meetings where the producer, Nigel Sinclair, Ron Howard, Mark Monroe and myself would sit around and discuss what was possible. The idea was, "Well if we're doing the touring years, how about if we structure things around performances," and having gone through the footage, we knew which were the strongest performances where we could do complete songs, and we decided we'd make those our "tent-poles." So then we're always striving to get to our tent-poles to move us forward. There was an extensive treatment written for what the story arcs would be and what the story would focus on, then Mark takes those ideas and we start structuring sound-bites together. From there we start laying in the supporting footage, the historic footage, the archives. I'll restructure from there, maybe take some stuff out that we don't need … back and forth in that manner. Then Ron has a look, gives us notes, and we'd circle back again to move forward. So it starts in a paper structure with sound-bites of talking heads, and we structure the rest of it around that.

Hullfish: A lot of structuring a documentary is killing your babies.

Paul Crowder: Crikey, the amount we couldn't use … it was painful the stuff we cut. Everybody has their analogy: Killing your children … Sophie's Choice… removing an arm. Whatever. It's that painful making some of these choices. It really is.

Hullfish: Tell me about some of those choices. I definitely wanted to explore that exact topic. I was certain that a bunch of great stuff had to be left on the cutting room floor.

Paul Crowder: There were so many moments. The Hamburg sequence was a wonderful sequence where we spent about 10 minutes talking about what it was like to play Hamburg. A few snippets exist in the film now, but using audio of a Star Club show on a bootleg that exists, we interweaved, we set the tone for Hamburg, we set the tone for who they were and how hard they had to work: 8 hours a day with an hour on and an hour off, so they were actually working 16 hours each day, playing constantly. A band today could never get away with learning their craft on stage today. There're very few clubs and everybody wants to be entertained, so you better do it or you're not getting another gig. But there, they were able to hone their craft and get better and better at it.

We interviewed Malcolm Gladwell, who talked about the fact that they were playing in a place that had strippers and drinking, so you'd better be able to entertain the drunks and be able to handle a rowdy audience, and you'd better have a plethora of songs because you can't just play the same eight songs, so they're pulling from the songs they grew up with, so they're doing "Taste of Honey," and they're doing all these old classic hits of that era. And all of that stuff ends up subconsciously within them. Not only have they honed their craft so that when they are playing Shea Stadium and they can't hear themselves, they know each other so well and they've played with each other for so many hours that that's easy. They trusted each other, and they all had that confidence to be able to play under those conditions.

So we told that story, and that's a massive part of who they are, and that was a killer —not only for the great photographs and the great sound, but just because it's an important part of who they are, but it was slightly outside of our timeline. It's pre-1962. So that was part of the decision-making. We tried to place it at a point in the film where we couldn't stop down for that long. We had to be rolling forward. The film couldn't take it where we wanted to put it, and we certainly couldn't start the film with a massive historical moment because that would just slow the pace in getting into the film and we'd lose the audience, so suddenly we had no place for it. So we

tried to save a couple of moments and sprinkle them in a couple of places, but essentially that was a really bad one because it's so interesting.

Sound Design

> "Audio allows the universe of the film to lift off the 2D world of the screen."

Hullfish: You and I have talked in the past about the importance of audio and sound design.

Steve Audette: For me, the audio is the story. The sound effects and sound design work that I do is an attempt to create a 3D world in which that story can live. It's the only element that allows the universe to lift off the 2D world of the screen. So that narrative is being held up by a bed of beautiful stereoscopic sound and then on top of that are images that are compelling and cut well so that the mind's eye can be drawn into the story. It's all about details.

Paula Heredia: Oh! Yeah! Sound is very important. I actually do a lot of design in my off-line process. I know that eventually a sound designer will come in and apply their art, but I want to make sure that I am building a good map of what I want and how I want things in terms of the kinds of sounds that I want and where those sounds should go. I build the concept, but I don't do the work of cleaning or EQing the sound or finding additional layers of ambience or sound effects. I build the layers related to dialogue and production sound, obviously music, and sometimes I might add a few effects that might be critical for the viewing experience so when I deliver the off-line project to my sound editor, they know exactly what I meant. This whole thing is about communication, and it's about the next person in this collective construction of a film knowing what the editor wants. That's the same relationship that you as an editor have with the director. You are trying to construct something based on the communication and understanding that you have from the person who brought the idea and the footage to you.

Image 10.7 Documentary director and editor Paula Heredia.

Hullfish: Paul, one thing I noticed on Dogtown and also on Eight Days is that there were environmental and maybe even **Foleyed** sound effects that just couldn't have been in the archival footage. The sounds of the grinding skateboards on the pool edge couldn't have been part of that Super 8mm footage, right?

> **Foley:** The re-creation of sound effects in a recording studio. Footsteps are a common example.

Paul Crowder: No. Absolutely, we worked over at DaneTracks on the sound on Dogtown and with Riding Giants and we spent a lot of time designing that sound. Stacy would ride around the parking lot, and they'd follow him around, and he'd do grinds, and we'd try to find concrete to grind on and asphalt so we had those sounds to embellish and really give that sense because all of the Super 8mm was **MOS**.

> **MOS:** Stands for footage that was captured without sound. There are numerous urban myths about why the acronym MOS means "without sound." My favorite is that a German sound engineer pronounced it "Mitt out sound."

Hullfish: Talk to me a little bit about sound design. I loved the sound design in Eight Days a Week. There are great little audio montages and ambiences and atmospheres. Did you actually do Foley on this movie?

Paul Crowder: A little. The guys we work with, Christopher Jenkins and Cameron Frankley and their team of people, did a bunch of Foley to accentuate and pick up what we had. I edit a lot on the beats. Because I'm a drummer, I really lean on the drums a lot for my editing and chord changes and things, possibly making me a little

predictable, but I feel like it's natural to me, it feels comfortable. I would give them the lead in my temp soundtracks … during the photo sessions, I'm always putting in camera clicks to try to drive it, and they would do the same things on snare rolls and fast hits and girls' voices, embellishing the screams, trying to put actual sounds in places where they should happen, to really put you in the moment so you really feel like you're in the audience when the camera is standing in front of the girls, you get the audio that that camera would have gotten. It just helped bring it to life. It was a mixture between what I had done as a basic thing because I always temp in sound mix. I can't stand to listen to it quiet. I'm always rhythmical in some manner, so they embellished and took it to a great place. I have to give them the credit for how great the film sounds.

Hullfish: There were little audio montages that I really liked that were bridges between sections.

Paul Crowder: That was my way of just wanting to get more intimate with them. We want to get in the bubble with them, in their world for a minute. Let's just be with them. We're going into the studio, so let's be in the studio for a minute and let them murmur and talk. We had access to that audio, Apple very graciously shared that audio with us, and we were able to listen to these moments. And if you close your eyes, you're there with them. You add a couple of photographs to it, and you're right there.

It's all just finding the natural sound, finding the tape loop or the tape start up or the voice when we come out of the Butcher Babies cover, and they've got this controversy about the cover and then the first word you hear after they put the new, boring album cover over the "Butcher cover" is "Sorry." Somebody making a mistake in the studio, but it connects as a perfect little link, and then you've got George and John and George Martin and Paul all having a tiny little conversation about what they're doing next, and it just drifts through the next couple of pictures. There's a lull, and you hear some messing about, and it's all loose and feeling a bit like you've walked through a door, and that's kind of the idea, and they're at it, and you've walked in to the middle of something. That was how I designed the studio moment. We literally go through the doorway. We see a contemporary Abbey Road, and we dissolve into an empty Studio 2, and the music and the sound does the same. It was all about opening doors. We did it in the opening scene. That's how we start. I found an audio section of them backstage, and I thought, "What if we started this like we were backstage with them before a show?" It was very difficult audio to hear, but there were some great moments in there. We started that with a door opening and somebody says, "RINGO!" and it's like you've walked into their dressing room. We sound design it as

if you're walking past a door, and you hear something and it's intriguing, and you stop and listen. That's the feeling and idea behind it.

Music

Hullfish: To me, Ken Burns' documentaries have such distinctive and powerful music. How do you temp that stuff?

Craig Mellish: We don't have temp music. A lot of people comment on our music, and I think that's probably the reason why: it's there from the beginning, and the scenes are shaped with it. In many cases, it's a pre-recorded piece. Films like Vietnam, The Tenth Inning or The Address all have contemporary music in them to help set the time frame of a scene for the viewer. And then sometimes we'll take a recorded track and expand upon it. I think the main theme of the National Parks series is a song called "Sligo Creek" that we found from a guy named Al Petteway. And we might want to use that song throughout the 6 episodes of the show. So instead of simply repeating it, we get 10, 15, 20 versions of it with different instrumentations and different tempos and moods, and then we'll use them as themes throughout the project, across all the episodes.

Hullfish: You mention the idea of a theme. Do you try to theme a specific story or character with a specific piece of music?

Craig Mellish: Sometimes. Most likely a character. On a film like our series, The Roosevelts, the three Roosevelts, Franklin, Eleanor and Theodore, would each have a song, in various forms that would have become their theme. We wouldn't create "Franklin's Theme," but a song might develop into something like that.

For me, finding the "perfect" piece of music is always a challenge. That's one of my main focuses, and if I don't have the right piece, I'll just cut the scene without it and come back. It could take me weeks to find the right song.

Hullfish: Paula, do you use music while you're cutting, or add it later?

Paula Heredia: I think of editing as if I was preparing a meal. I don't believe you make a potato and tomato soup and put the potato at the end because it never mixes the way those two things should mix. So I work with music as I go. The way I work with composers is to build a bin of samples of the composer's work.

Hullfish: Obviously in a documentary about music, there are a lot of great musical moments, but one of my favorites is the great contrast between the song "Good Day

Sunshine" and the negative images and negative vibe that's happening in the movie on top of it.

Paul Crowder: I'm always trying to look at the songs of the right era. It was literally to do just what you said: juxtapose … Paul, just before this, says, "Oh no! It's going to be fine. You'll see." He thinks the controversy about the "bigger than Jesus" statement will blow over, and you come off of that to this "dadadadadadadadadada" (drum beats of "Good Day Sunshine"), so there's tension and the images move fast to that, and then they're singing, "Good Day Sunshine," but really it's not. You're walking into hell. So trying to play one off the other. The reality is that it's not going to be great, and the imagery tells you that.

Hullfish: Talk to me about score and temp. Most people would probably not expect this movie to be scored. I was thinking specifically about the section where George says he doesn't want to tour any more, but I know there were several other places as well.

Paul Crowder: There're two places … at the very end where we're at Candlestick. Originally we were going to have them perform at Candlestick, the last performance, but the sound is so poor, and the sound we wanted to use—which is the last song they performed, "Long Tall Sally"—only the first 36 or 40 seconds of audio exist, and we would have had to cheat the rest of the music from another performance, and we didn't want to do that. The footage is very sporadic and Super 8mm and not very clear. There're some great Jim Marshall photographs. But we felt like "we don't need to hear them play now." We've already made the point that they're not playing well. We already made the point that they can't hear themselves. So we re-approached it thinking "What if it was score?" It was the same with the opening and doing the backstory. There's not a Beatles song that really fits here, and we don't want to be wall-to-wall Beatles music because that will get tiresome, and we don't want to bore our audience. Originally we had this opening that featured an analogy with Mozart that Malcolm Gladwell said that Mozart wasn't brilliant from the start. He had to work at it. His first symphony was rubbish, but by the time he gets to Symphony 30, he's a genius. So for that reason, we were considering using all classical music to score the rest of the film, but that didn't work. We did go down that path, though. Then we decided to find a nice piece of empty score that feels classy and just sits behind. The people we used to score the movie are called Matter. I've been working with them since Riding Giants. I've used them whenever I can on everything since. They're fantastic people. Dan Pinella, Chris Wagner and Ric Markman. They came up with these beautiful moments. I put some temp music in there to give them a little bit of a lead and then they did it, but that whole end section you're talking about, that was all

scored by them. It's a beautiful section. It's so emotional at that moment. We wanted a respite from the Beatles music.

Collaboration

Hullfish: Andy, do you get an opportunity to ask the director for additional footage or a re-shoot on an interview if you don't feel you have enough to tell a story?

Andy Grieve: That's the way Alex Gibney actually works. He shoots the interviews, and we wait till we're pretty much picture-locked before we do any of the re-enactments or b-roll or graphics or anything like that.

> "It's important to edit while you shoot so you discover the things that would be great to have."

Paula Heredia: It's very important that you edit while you shoot so that you discover the things that would be great to have. You also have to leave some time and budget at the end for pick-ups. Because as you begin sculpting this—it's kind of sculpture with elements coming in from different places. The footage is the clay, and as you begin building this sculpture, you will know that the structure needs something to support an arm that you already have, but you don't know how you're going to link it to the body.

Hullfish: Describe your collaboration with your directors, especially with Alex, whom you've worked with multiple times. When do you stand up for what you think is right, and how do you know that you should cede to the director?

> "It is important that the edit room be a place where people can express opinions and share ideas."

Andy Grieve: It is really important to me that the edit room be a place where people can express opinions and share ideas and not feel like they are going to offend anyone or step on anyone's toes, and Alex feels the same. He gives me the space to work and be creative, and I give him the space to bring his ideas to the process. It has been a great collaboration.

Paula Heredia: When you're an editor working for a director, you need to have a certain synchronicity because it's two people breathing, it's two people thinking, it's two people applying their brains and talents to one thing.

Hullfish: Let's talk about that synchronization. That's the heart of collaboration. How do you find yourself negotiating with the director between agreeing or disagreeing and coming to a compromise and feeling strong about your own personal decisions while also trying to serve the vision of the director?

> "You are directing the editorial process, but you are not directing the film."

Paula Heredia: When you are an editor working for a director, you are there to use your talent for someone else's vision. It's not your vision. You're putting your talent in use to make that vision happen. So that's a very clear role as an editor. You might feel very strong about telling the story this way or telling this part of the story and the other person might be wrong about not doing it, but at the end of the day, it's not your film. It's the film of this person you're working for. So you need to feel very comfortable about sharing your talent and putting it in function to someone else's vision. You are there to give the director your best advice and your best direction because you are directing the editorial process, but you are not directing the film. You are helping the director go through a process that's going to help him or her make a film.

Hullfish: I agree with that, and that was beautifully spoken. But how do you negotiate when you have a strong feeling and you think the director should listen to you, but you also know that it's their movie?

Paula Heredia: It depends on the relationship that you have with the director. A lot of what editors do is psychology. How you communicate and how you handle your relationships depends on the person you are dealing with. That's the art of being a communicator sitting in the editor's chair.

Hullfish: Paul, how did you and Ron Howard collaborate?

Paul Crowder: We would talk a lot about what we were trying to achieve and where we were going. There was a lot of communication before we got in the edit bay. When we start a structure, we've already got our treatment. We've already got our outline. We know how we're going to structure the story from here to here to here to here. So then, through Mark Monroe and myself, we go through the first pass structure. Mark and I would hone that structure and make sure it was in good shape and

then send it to Ron, and then Ron would give us his thoughts and his notes, and we'd go back through the same kind of process again, just me, Mark and Nigel and then back to Ron. So very collaborative all the way. We already knew how we wanted to tell the story. We knew the moments we wanted to feature, and then there were these wonderful surprises. That was one of my favorite things was sending Ron and Nigel these little sections, like when I found Larry Kane's audio of him having this epiphany 13 shows in that he realizes that he's watching something that's unlike anything that's come before and is probably unlike anything that will ever happen again. He said that in 1964, and he's correct. Living in that world for 13 days, he's noticing that. Or when I found that gold studio moment, and I'd send them off to Ron, and it would get everyone so excited about what we could do. It was very collaborative. It was always going around the circle. Ron was making a few other films so he was traveling a lot. I'd sometimes sit in the edit bay with Skype and just point the laptop at the screen, and he'd watch it over the phone on the screen, and we'd discuss what we were doing that way.

Notes and Revisions

Hullfish: What kind of notes are you taking when you screen your first cut?

Steve Audette: In an hour long show on the first pass, I make about 50 or 60 notes. They are, generally speaking, more technical than story structure at that point. The rest of the team watches and will say, "I got bored here. The film sat down at 40 minutes in, and I don't know why." We then spend about two or three days fixing that stuff from the first screening. Frequently, it's too much narration. Sometimes it's "rabbit holes," which means we get too detailed about a certain particular part of the story that we get away from our overall story. Just being in the room with other people changes things like you can't even imagine. I love that experience of watching it through their eyes because it makes it extremely fresh for me. And it's in that pass that I'm doing all of the narrative story stuff: pacing, rhythms, story arcs and transitions.

Hullfish: How long is that first pass and where does it go from there?

> "No scene in an hour-long show should be longer than the length of hand and a half of the script."

Steve Audette: Early in week six, we screen with the executive team. After that screening, we make their changes, which, generally speaking, are really good ideas.

Then we have a fine cut screening with them, and it's at that point where we tell the executive producer how long or short we are. The reason we wait that long is because we really don't know what they're going to want to add or subtract from the doc. I would say that the rough cut is usually eight minutes too long, the fine cuts might be four minutes long. The film I'm working on now is a two-hour film, and it was nine minutes long after the rough cut. The danger with most films at this point is that if you start pulling at a thread, you might wreck it. We have an unusual and effective technique to determine what to cut: we measure the length of scenes. We do that not by how long they are in terms of minutes, but how much space they take up on a script. We print the script and cut it into a long paper chain, then we circle each scene. We immediately see which scene is too long. No scene in an hour-long show should be longer than the length of hand and a half. Story is a linear process. If the scene is taking up a hand and a half of space, you can still truncate it without wrecking the story.

Hullfish: How much of the script structure—the way it is first written—remains in the final doc as it is aired?

Craig Mellish: Structurally speaking, the script stays pretty much as it was originally written. But the narration is constantly tweaked. During editing, we'll drop things like talking heads in favor of narration because we can make the point clearer that way. Recently on Vietnam, in one of my episodes, we had two Vietnamese stories separated by 30 minutes, and we decided, near the end of editing, to put them back to back because they were subtly connected to each other. And they would have been fine where they were, but now they really work together as a piece. I guess we try and do the majority of the big changes before we get to the editing.

Hullfish: How do you deal with receiving notes on a cut of a film?

Craig Mellish: Everybody's opinion is listened to, and Ken will write all of them down. After we take comments from everyone, we then retire to another room where we sit around the table and go page by page through the script, what we call "going into the trenches." A lot of the time the changes are writing changes, which I have no control over. But other times it's "Let's get a new photo here, or let's change this piece of music. Open up space here, close it down there." I'll write those notes in my script in red. I don't have a giant two-hour cut, I work in reels.

Hullfish: True 20-minute film reels?

Craig Mellish: When I first started at Florentine Films, we were still cutting on film so I try and keep them between 20 and 25 minutes. It helps me mentally too: knowing

that I don't have to go for 2 hours straight.

> "Sometimes you fall in love with the material too much. It's easy to lose sight of what really needs to be done."

When we get notes, we push back when we get really passionate about it. We live with these things constantly, and they're our babies. Sometimes you fall in love with the material too much. It has to be this shot or this piece of music. And that's it. It's easy to lose sight of what really needs to be done sometimes. Obviously, Ken and the senior producers are the deciding voices. But you can convince them to change their minds if you sell it well enough.

Hullfish: You made a choice for a reason, and I think that the producer values the passion that you bring to defending that.

Craig Mellish: In the end, it's a collaboration. That's what makes it a better film.

Hullfish: Do you do screenings for test audiences? And what do you discover in those screenings?

> "When you see a film with other people, you see it in a very different way."

Paula Heredia: Screenings are actually quite interesting because sometimes you do a screening just to see the film yourself. When you see it with other people, you see it in a very different way. When it's a formal screening, you cannot touch the computer and stop and say, "Let me change this." So sometimes screenings are just for that. You oblige yourself to have an experience looking at the film from beginning to end, and you always learn something about it. That moment when you cringe or you are bored or where there are moments where you don't want the scene to end tells you a lot. There are very few people I've encountered who are right when they describe a problem in a scene or in a film, and they can tell you actually what the problem is. Usually, someone who comes and screens a film will be sophisticated enough to know that there is an issue and they will try to describe it. My experience is that it's not exactly what they are saying that is correct, but they are pointing out something that they think the problem is and they might be right, but often it's not what they describe that's wrong—it's something else. Most of the time they can't articulate exactly what's wrong, but it's good to know that something is wrong. That's useful.

Miscellaneous Documentary Wisdom

Hullfish: One of the things you use a lot is visual metaphors.

Steve Audette: One of the signs we have in our edit room is "Speak to peers." I'm always trying to make sure that I am making a visual environment that is as compelling as the bed of the story. Editors are the masters of maximizing the Kuleshov Effect. Kuleshov is a filmmaker in Russia who came to realize that every image has two values. It has the value of the image itself and the value of the image it's juxtaposed against. It's that combination of two values that excites the imagination of the viewer.

We try to create a universe that a film lives in. Every Frontline documentary has a certain sound design. Even when I go to a still photograph, I try to get the production assistant to find me walla-walla (indistinct background speaking and noise), so that the photograph itself has life. Is there something we can do to enhance the emotional experience of the narrative with color correction? For the visual part, we really try to make the pictures make sense in terms of a visual thumbprint. If you go on-line, you can see the visual thumbprint of Star Wars or Black Hawk Down, you can see the color palette of the movie.

Hullfish: How do you keep from getting overwhelmed? How much footage do you think you went through on the Scientology film? 120 hours? 130?

Andy Grieve: I've never really done the math. Probably 25 hours of interviews and easily 100 hours of archival. Easily 75 to 100 hours. I start by watching the interviews, if that's possible, because it clues you in to the kind of archival footage you should be looking for and because you kind of start to see threads through stories and can see that, for example, these two characters shared an experience and can be intercut, or they talk about the same thing. So if the driving thing for the film is going to be the interviews, for me that guides the rest of it.

Hullfish: What are some of the amounts of raw footage that you're coping with on other projects?

Andy Grieve: The talking heads and archival stories are all in the 100–300 hour range. The one that was the most out-of-control was this movie, The Carter, about Li'l Wayne and that was entirely vérité, and they spent a month with the guy, and they just rolled the camera non-stop and there were two cameras a lot of the time, so that was easily 500 hours plus. There'd be hours of footage of them hanging out in the recording studio and then suddenly, out of nowhere he decides to tell the story of los-

ing his virginity. Suddenly you have 7 minutes of this incredible footage, and his friends are all laughing at this amazing moment. It's sort of like a treasure hunt. If I didn't have the patience, I could have easily just fast-forwarded past that.

Hullfish: How do you build or create emotional impact in your documentaries? Do you have to worry about being too manipulative with emotion?

> "I never want to create a false sense of cause and effect."

Andy Grieve: I am always concerned with cause and effect. I am OK with manipulating things for emotional impact or story arc, but I never want to create a false sense of cause and effect. In the end, documentaries are about finding truths, and you have to be honest in that pursuit.

Craig Mellish: Ken refers to what we do as Emotional Archaeology. One of the things I like about our stuff is that it's not just a recitation of facts. You're getting the individual stories that tell the bigger story.

Hullfish: What sells a performance for you?

Craig Mellish: I think the key to our stuff is the direction that Ken will give. He says: "Let the words do the work."

Hullfish: David Mamet wrote a book called, On Directing, and he says that all the best stuff is uninflected. You don't need to add the emotion, the emotion is there.

Craig Mellish: You know when a voice actor understands what they're reading and gets it.

Hullfish: What's your personal philosophy about editing or producing documentaries?

Paula Heredia: When I take up the challenge of a picture, it is because I am convinced I can communicate something that I feel. And if I can translate that with the footage that I have, with the way I edit it and share it with you, that's the only goal that I put to myself. If I can convey that passion and emotion in my films, everything else just happens by itself.

> "You must remain true to the footage."

Hullfish: The name of my company is Verascope Pictures because the idea of truth is important to me in telling a story. How do you stay true in telling a documentary story?

Paula Heredia: You must remain true to the footage. In Unzipped, when I had the interview with the director, a few of my colleagues had already interviewed for it, and they told me "There's nothing in there … the footage is all over the place … the camera moves around like crazy … everything is out of focus … what can anybody do with that?" But when I interviewed with the director, I understood him, and I realized that the craziness of the way that the film was shot was very unintentional, but I could see how that footage could represent the craziness in the brain and the way the director saw life—saw the story itself. The director, Douglas Keeve, and the designer, Isaac Mizrahi, were breaking up from a long relationship, and all of that was part of that emotional state of the footage. If you look at the footage rationally, it doesn't make any sense. There's nothing there. But if you look at the footage and say, "I believe that the director has an intention, and I understand that intention," then I can take that footage and organize it and bring out of that footage the best that is; the vision of what that film is. As an editor, you have to start by believing that there is something in the footage and that you can bring it out. That's a process of cleaning the weeds out of something. And when it's clean and you play it, you can see it better.

Before we move on to the final chapter of the book, I would like to point out again the wealth of additional resources on the companion website for the book: www.routledge.com/cw/Hullfish.

This site includes several additional chapters that were not possible to fit into the printed version of the book. These chapters include topics like NLEs, schedules, multi-editor collaboration, editing with VFX, and a chapter dedicated to editors discussing the editing secrets of specific movie scenes. The companion website also includes numerous screengrabs from various projects that help illustrate points in all of the chapters. The website has full color, full resolution images that are not available in the book.

The site also includes the complete interviews on which this book was based. This book is approximately 130,000 words. The interviews contain over 250,000 words. If

an editor on these pages has piqued your interest in learning more about him (or her) and his (or her) techniques, I urge you to spend time reading their complete interview, which undoubtedly goes into more depth than the sections of the interview that I used for the book. These transcriptions may not be as thoroughly edited as the pages of this book, but they are full of additional insights into the editorial craft. I take full responsibility for any typos, spelling or grammatical errors. I will also occasionally attempt to update the website with additional interviews and chapter supplements using interviews conducted after this book was delivered to the publisher.

The final chapter in the printed version of the book is Miscellaneous Wisdom. This is a catch-all chapter of great information that didn't find a home in previous chapters.

Chapter 11
Miscellaneous Wisdom

This is a catch-all chapter with some absolutely great insight and wisdom, but the topics didn't generate enough response to be turned into full-fledged chapters, so I combined a bunch of the best stuff that just didn't have a home anywhere else into this little "gems" chapter. Consider it the "Easter egg" of the book.

How did you Break into the Business?

Hullfish: What got you interested in editing?

Kelley Dixon, Breaking Bad: I was a journalism major in college, and we had a broadcasting class where we had to edit, so I kind of started there and I thought it was fun. Then when I got out to Hollywood, I became a production assistant on thirtysomething. I thought I wanted to be on set, in the middle of everything, but my duties took me from department to department delivering stuff, and I found that the editors work the longest schedule and they had better hours. More importantly, editing took several months, and they got to be in meetings and have long conversations with above-the-line people. So, I thought that was the best place to be because you're really shaping the show. You're getting to understand what the writers, directors and producers really had in mind. But on the set, everything is about "making **the day**." So, I thought that editing would be way better and cooler. While I was on thirtysomething, one of my mentors started giving me scenes to cut. He taught me how to use the machine. He told me that I was good at it, and I found out much later that he was taking my scenes and putting them directly into the show.

Making the day: For the production team—camera, AD, electric, sound and grip—this means that the cast and crew was able to shoot the scheduled number of scenes that were planned for that day. Generically, this usually means shooting about four pages a day, but can vary widely between productions and between specific days in a production.

Hullfish: That's awesome. When you said, "Editors work longer." That doesn't sound good, but you meant it as a good thing, right?

Kelley Dixon: Yeah. If you're on a film on crew, let's say the film will shoot for 25 days, then you're looking for another job. But editors can work on a film for several months. So, editors, editing teams, post-production starts when filming starts and then they work for months longer. I thought, "I don't want to look for a job every month."

Hullfish: How did you make the transition from assistant to editor on Breaking Bad?

> "You have to be on a show that gives you the time to cut."

Kelley Dixon: I was so ready to move up by then. I'd been assisting for way too long! Although, I do admit to having spent a few too many years chasing my Big Feature Assistant dream—which never really happened. So I got into TV and just stayed there. But the situation has to be right to move up. You have to be with an editor that lets you cut, that is not intimidated by you or your work, that encourages you, that will tell producers you did the work, etc. You also have to be on a show that gives you the time to cut. If you're constantly doing ScriptSync (UGH!!), VFX, SFX, music, media management, paperwork, exports, etc., finding time to cut will be tough. Even on your own time after hours or on weekends. There also has to be some sort of avenue to move up: like another editor leaving the show. Or your editor leaving the show. Or encouragement to share credit, etc.

Pilots are good ways for assistants to move up. If the show gets picked up, they will need to staff. And usually, pilot assistants are already very strong and ready to get an opportunity. I'd been cutting scenes for editors since the beginning. Even as a PA on thirtysomething. But cutting a scene here or there is nowhere near enough training. I was lucky enough to not work for too many jerks. Most of my editors were encouraging and confident. That was so important to me. So I was looking for a strong, popular editor because they get the good jobs.

> "Pilots are good ways for assistants to move up."

I was hired by my friend (editor) Juan Garza to work on a mini series for NBC called Revelations, back in 2005. But there were several editors (I think five at least!) on the project, and I was one of three or four assistants, working for all the editors. I met

Lynne Willingham there, who was sort of an editing hero of mine. She'd been cutting five seasons of The X-Files. And her husband, Chris Willingham (who I didn't meet yet, but another hero!), was cutting my favorite show at the time, 24. Lynne eventually offered me a job on her next show, Without a Trace. I took it because I really liked working with Lynne, I'd get to cut a lot, and everyone who'd assisted her had moved up to editor.

We went on to do Season 4 and part of Season 5 of Without a Trace. I started cutting a scene a day. Then two scenes per day. Then in Season 5, I asked her if I could start cutting half of the show. I needed to build up chops … learn how to pace acts. Learn how to transition from scene to scene. Then Lynne got the call from Vince Gilligan to do the Breaking Bad pilot in February of 2007. So we moved on to that.

The plan was that I would get to cut a lot on that pilot so I'd have enough under my belt to ask for an editing job if it got picked up. But we had a lot of sound issues and a ton of SFX work to do so I only got to cut two scenes. One of them was the Meth Montage. Which proved to be enough. But I also spent a lot of time in the room with Vince and Producer Karen Moore during Director and Producer cuts, so they got to know me and the work that I could do. I asked for the job during Studio Cut time and they said, "Yes" right then.

So my first episode was "And the Bag's In the River," where Walt kills Krazy 8 in Jesse's basement. It was amazing and very tough and a great learning experience.

Hullfish: Andy, any advice on breaking in?

Andy Weisblum, Alice Through the Looking Glass: Just cut anything you can. Be open to the opportunities to cut when you can.

Hullfish: And actively create those opportunities, even if it means shooting something yourself. I was just telling a student to re-shoot a scene of a movie with some friends and an iPhone and cut that. Anything to get editing time.

> "In the editing room it's just you and the director or producer … they're going to know who you are."

Joe Mitacek, Grey's Anatomy: I had a strong interest in film, specifically, how film was made, the people behind it. I didn't go to film school, but I got my first PA job with the show, Boston Public. That was a David E. Kelly series. I met a lot of people that had been in the business for quite a few years and across the board, they were re-

ally encouraging, and they started just throwing movies at me and got me into some foreign films and a lot of books and things to start really understanding the filmmaking process. Having a general office PA position was a good thing because I met all these different people in different departments. I thought maybe the camera department would be an interesting way to go, but the more I was reading about the filmmakers that I was interested in, I realized they kept commenting on their editors they worked with and how much they enjoyed the process of editing and how critical an editor was to the process. I thought, "I really don't know how to make a film, but to learn from people like the directors or producers, if you're in the camera department, you're competing on set with a hundred other people, but in the editing room it's just you and the director or even a producer." I thought, "There's two advantages to being in editorial: 1) you're going to learn a hell of a lot, and 2) they're going to know who you are." You get this time with them, and you can forge a relationship.

So that was where my interest started to lean towards editing. I also found that, particularly with David E. Kelley, that that company was very post-production friendly, very editorially friendly. They have had a number of producers and directors that had come through post and editorial. I thought that this was definitely a sort of prize department within this particular company. To be quite honest, at the time when I did start getting into post, even as an assistant editor, I still wasn't really clear as to what an editor truly did. I mean, I knew you were putting the show together, in the simplest terms. You're following a script, which seems like a guide, but it seemed so incredibly effortless. You're watching it and it's logical. It just seems like that's what you should do. You logically put stuff together and you make the show. That doesn't seem that hard.

Hullfish: (Laughs)

Joe Mitacek: It wasn't until I started assisting and spending a lot more time doing it that I really saw, "OK, there are actually problems. You get continuity issues and you get maybe a scene that needs to be cut down or you want to intercut some sequences, or you're scoring the show or you're dropping music in or something. And all of a sudden, I realize, 'Wow, they do quite a bit of shaping and packaging of an episode.'" You have all these scenes and things, and a lot of stuff is going to start being reworked, as you know. And you're looking for a lot more than just putting the scenes together and making sense of them. It's like, "Is this scene critical? Do we need this? Can we collapse this into another scene? Does it feel like these beats and moments are happening at the right time? Or do we feel like we need to let some areas breathe a little bit, so it's not overly front-loaded?" Or you're hitting a climactic moment at the right time. It's the sort of satisfying rhythm that a well-constructed movie has or

the feeling that it just feels right. Many of these decisions have to be made by the producers instead of the editors. We rely on Shonda Rhimes. She's tracking the story in a global sense and tonally where she wants it to go. So she is relaying that information to us, and we're making the adjustments. But I'll ask her questions, "Is this moment important?" or "Is this little beat in between these two characters planting a seed for something coming down stream?" And she may say, "Oh no, this is just a little moment in time for this episode" or "This is a huge thing that's gonna pay off three episodes from now." So, being aware of that is important.

> "Good editors always know where the audience wants to look."

Hullfish: Was there a movie or a moment that really propelled you into wanting to be an editor?

Dan Hanley, In the Heart of the Sea: My dad was in the industry, so I got to hang around sets a lot. He was an assistant editor on Star Trek. So when I was 12 years old, I got to hang out on the set of the original Star Trek series with Shatner and Nimoy and the rest of the cast. I thought it was fantastic. I remember watching movies and being so enthralled by performance and watching good acting. Cool Hand Luke and Paul Newman's performance is the first time I remember sitting back and taking notice of performance. Editors get to piece those performances together and see acting day in and day out. Well not always but if you're lucky. I used to hang out with some of the editors down the hall that would let me sit and watch them. It was intriguing to me. I like watching people and how they interact. I've gotten caught sitting at parties, and somebody will say, "What? Are you just sitting here watching everybody?" And I'd say, "Well, yeah I like it." Editing is kind of like that in some regard.

Hullfish: Absolutely. That describes me.

Dan Hanley: I mean, if you're sitting in a room, where does your eye go? Everybody has a little different take on it, but good editors always know where the audience wants to look. That's kind of the trick of it, isn't it?

> "The cutting room is the most intimate environment where you actually make the film."

Pietro Scalia, The Martian: I chose specifically after school to go into editing. I loved editing. I discovered it while I was doing my documentaries. It was a form of writing. I felt really comfortable. I was good at it. And I thought that if I wanted to be a director, I needed to get as close as possible to the director, and I think that the cutting room is the most intimate environment where you actually make the film.

Emotion

Hullfish: What appeals to you when you look at a script?

Anne Coates, Lawrence of Arabia: One film—and I suppose this covers a lot of them in a way—was Elephant Man. When I was first offered Elephant Man and started reading it, I thought, "Oh my God, I can't work with this face on my Moviola every day!" But then I read on for a bit and read on for a bit more, and I thought, "This is fantastic!" And I was starting to get very emotional about it and, by the end, I felt I had to do that film, I so loved it. There was just something so emotional about it that appealed to me, and it was so real. It was a very, very good script. At that time I was also offered a big Disney film with a big swashbuckling hero. A big film. Much bigger than anything I'd ever done and much more money and all of that sort of thing, but I wanted to do Elephant Man because I found it very emotional and a wonderful story. There's one line in it that brings a lump to my throat almost every time I ever see it.

Hullfish: What's the line?

Anne Coates: When he goes to tea with Treve's wife, and he says, "I must have been such a disappointment to my mother." He was fairly normal when he was first born and just got worse and worse and worse. His mother rejected him. It's just the way he says it. John Hurt was so good in that part. It's funny, because if you saw him walking about when he had the mask on and everything, you'd want to help him along, like he was an old man. He was so real.

Hullfish: Fabienne, let's discuss the way that editing these different genres—comedy, horror and straight drama—are different.

> "You want the number one objective to be conveying the emotional state of your characters."

Fabienne Bouville, American Horror Story: It is very different to edit those three genres. With all of them, you want the number one objective to be conveying the emotional state of your characters and also to be able to follow the plot, which is the backbone of the story. That's the same for all genres, but the objective of the story is different. With horror, it's all about building tension, in every scene you're building tension until it explodes. In comedy, you're looking for the funny. You still need to be grounded in the emotional experience of the characters and make sure each step of the plot is clear, but your approach is ultimately all in service to the funny. In drama, there isn't that extra layer of manipulation. Beyond the plot being clear, conveying the emotional state of the characters is really all that matters.

So in the cutting room, the conversations are very different. In horror, you want to always keep your approach fresh, you always have to be inventing a new way so that you can surprise an audience. If you are approaching the material the same way twice, you will never be able to keep anyone on the edge of their seat, unsettled. They will know what's coming, and there will be no tension. Creatively it's very demanding because you always have to be inventing a new approach.

In drama, all of the craft is in service to the emotional state of the characters, and the editing is fully in support of the writing and the performance. It does not call attention to itself because that would distract from the emotional experience of the character; whereas with horror you are willfully shaping the edit so that it doesn't feel right. Of course, there is crossover and you might end up using a lot of the same techniques, but the approach on the material is definitely different. With comedy, the use of atypical editing techniques like jump cuts or very loud music or jumping the line, for example, falls somewhere in between. With Glee, I got to use some of these techniques because sometimes the audience needs to be caught off guard for comic effect.

Hullfish: I think part of my job is to—well, not manipulate the audience's emotion, but definitely guide or push them—maybe manipulate is the right word …

Eddie Hamilton, Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation: Manipulate is exactly the right word.

Hullfish: Give me an example of how—in one of your movies—Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation would be best—how the audience's emotions are being manipulated.

> "You're manipulating the audience's emotion with every cut by what you are choosing to show and how long you are choosing to show it."

Eddie Hamilton: Well, you're manipulating the audience's emotion with every cut by what you are choosing to show and how long you are choosing to show it. It's what we do as filmmakers. It's filmmaking. There isn't really an example. It's the whole movie. You can watch any scene, and you can see how you're being manipulated. Some people take offense to using that word—manipulation—but the simple fact of the matter is that audiences buy a movie ticket to have an emotional experience. And they're choosing the kind of movie they want to see to have that particular kind of emotional experience. They're choosing to see Sinister because they want to be scared, or they're choosing to see Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation to be engaged with the action and plot twists, or they're choosing to see Jurassic Park because they want to be thrilled by dinosaurs. And when they don't have their emotions manipulated, they feel like they haven't got their money's worth.

So our job as editors is to start at the beginning of the film and figure out how to manipulate people on a shot-by-shot basis. And then on a scene-by-scene basis and then over the duration of the entire movie. An example from Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation would be the choice NOT to put music on a suspense scene; that was a way to manipulate the audience because you're not giving them the easy reassurance of score. You're not telling them how it's going to end. You're playing the scene out bare. This is the scene in the middle of Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation where Tom Cruise is underwater, and the sound effects play for several long minutes. And the audience is confronted by the reality of the situation. They're holding their breath too. You can hear a pin drop. Then we, as filmmakers, chose to start the music at a point in the sequence where we wanted to dramatically increase the excitement of the scene, and when you see the film, you'll understand what I'm referring to.

Another example of how we manipulate the audience (and it's right at the beginning of the film) is where we start by teasing the Mission: Impossible theme very lightly, "Remember this cool music that you used to love when you were younger? This is the kind of cool stuff you're gonna get." And then we don't play it. We save it until the opening credits, which come three or four minutes later. We just tease you. We're just going to tickle you a little bit, but we're not going to give it to you yet. We have a terrific music cue playing, and we get the characters who are all trying to stop this plane from taking off, and they're going to fail and just as all hope is lost, Ethan Hunt appears and manages to get on board the airplane, and then there's some humorous stuff where they're trying to get the doors open, and it's great stuff, and we know that's humor and we want the audience to laugh there.

And there's a terrific end to the scene, which is very funny and entertaining, and then we blast into the opening credits, and we have a very stylish and fast cut opening title

sequence which is telling you, “This is going to be really great fun guys, and there’s cool gadgets, and there’s all these great actors that you’ve seen in the other Mission: Impossible movies and they’re all in this one.” And that’s how we’re doing it. We’re choosing how to manipulate everybody second-by-second through the film.

> “We’re choosing how to manipulate everybody second by second through the film.”

Hullfish: I deal less with action and more with drama, and for me the reaction shots manipulate and show emotion …

Eddie Hamilton: Yes. Absolutely.

Hullfish: I’d actually love to experiment with a cut of a scene where I’m never on the person speaking.

Eddie Hamilton: The problem is that there will be certain pieces of information that are key to the story of the film, and audiences do not pay attention when it’s playing on a reaction shot.

> “For information to be remembered by the audience, you should play it with the character saying the line on camera.”

Hullfish: That’s interesting.

Eddie Hamilton: They’re paying attention to the emotion of the character who is hearing the line. But if you want a specific piece of information to go into the head of the audience, it’s a pretty safe bet that you should play it with the character saying the line on camera if it’s something that is really crucial. Like for example, “You have to drop the photon torpedo into the exhaust port of the Death Star to blow it up.” If you’re playing that piece of information on Luke Skywalker listening, you won’t understand when he’s getting to that point, and he’s got to get the photon torpedo down the exhaust port of the Death Star. The crucial piece of information will not have landed for you, and you won’t understand what he’s doing, so in every dialogue scene there will be something which is important for the audience to take forward to the rest of the story, and so my initial response to just playing it on reaction shots is that something will be missed, and some crucial piece of information will not land properly, and therefore it will cause a story problem later in the film.

Geography

Lee Smith, Spectre: I believe in geography. I like to see the environment because then eye-lines all make sense. I do see films, where, for some reason, the editor has cut tight into a scene and then clearly had forgotten that they'd run 60 seconds of dialogue and the audience doesn't know who's looking at whom. Then they might cut out wide just because they fancied ending on a wide shot. But the whole problem is that it's confusing when there are four people talking in a scene, and you've never set up that geography.

> "I like to see the environment because then eye-lines all make sense."

Hullfish: Talk to me about editing action. The audience needs to understand the geography and the physical relationship between the protagonist and the antagonist so that the story works within the action. You need to know where everybody is.

Alan Bell, Hunger Games: Catching Fire: You need to make sure that the geography of the scene is very clear. I think that you can really get lost when you're cutting action. I remember when I first started cutting action, I thought it meant having a lot of cuts. And cutting quick. I'm guilty of that as much as anyone. But I don't think that's a primary aspect of what action is about. You have to look at the intent of the scene. Where's the antagonist? Where's the protagonist? Where do they travel throughout the scene? Is it clear to the audience who's who at any given time? And if I cut from one place to the next, is that disorienting? Do I want it to be disorienting? And then, pacing happens in the cut, but it also happens inter-frame (the motion within the frame), and I think that's where people make a lot of mistakes. They see something, and it doesn't seem fast enough for them, so they choose to cut. But sometimes there are other ways to speed up portions of the frame to keep the pace up and not have your action scenes seem cutty.

Hullfish: How would you do that inter-frame?

Alan Bell: Split screens and time warps. I actually use them a lot. I'll timewarp (speed up or slow down) one character and not the other, or the whole piece so I don't have to cut away.

Hullfish: Sure. That allows you to maintain the relationship in timing and in space between the antagonist and the protagonist.

Alan Bell: Exactly.

Mary Jo Markey, Star Wars: The Force Awakens: That understanding of where everyone is and what's happening to everyone is a big deal. Sometimes it's just a matter of backing up one shot. It's something that's important to all three of us I think. We don't like that sense of "Wham! Bam! Pow! Something just happened. I'm not sure what, but our guy seems to be OK." We want you to be able to understand what happened and why he's OK or why he got out or who landed which punch.

> "The understanding of where everyone is and what's happening to everyone is a big deal."

David Brenner, Batman v Superman: Absolutely, if you stay too close too long then it can become claustrophobic and confusing. It's clear and refreshing to cut wide, but when you do, try to go in on strong movement, otherwise you can suffer a loss of energy, going from a lot of movement to no movement is usually jarring.

Lee Smith: Fight scenes kind of live and die on the quality of the fight coordinators and the ability of the actors to perform most of the fights themselves. If the stuntman or stuntwoman is heavily featured, it can be a little bit tricky in terms of angle choice as the stunt performer has to be hidden from the audience. CGI has been used of late for head replacement, which is very useful, but the physical movement of stunt person versus actor is quite often the giveaway, making it difficult for the editor to hold onto a shot for any length of time. You have to follow who you're with and make it as clear to the audience as possible at every given moment what's going on. Some fight sequences end up getting cut to the point where you have no understanding of who's fighting who or they might be lit in such a way that it's difficult to figure out who's fighting who, and you have to slow the cut down just a little bit to make sure you're with the main character. The fight has to have a narrative reason to be there rather than just people fighting. If there's a cause and effect, you can follow it. If it's just random explosions and people flying through the air and getting shot at, it gets boring very quickly. Indeed, fight sequences get boring very quickly if they're not moving the story along. Just the visual excitement of it in some films is very tiring when the fight sequences just seem to go on too long.

> "The fight has to have a narrative reason to be there rather than just people fighting."

You can go into high-speed photography (slow motion) just to clarify a story point, which can be fun and very stylish. Or you can go for the visceral, realistic fight. You have to have the stakes sorted out. You have to have some reason for that action sequence to take place. Who's stopping who and why are they stopping them and stay within some realms of plausible logic.

Learn from your Mistakes

Hullfish: Lee, do you find in the grammar or the syntax of editing that you are trying to build to a close-up on a specific moment? Someone showed me a scene they'd cut with a cut to a big close-up at what I thought was a rather mundane moment.

Lee Smith: The other trap you can fall into is that if the director shoots a lot of coverage, for example, there was a sequence in Green Card, a Peter Weir film, where Peter had covered the sequence in super close-ups. He'd covered the whole sequence conventionally, then again in profile and then shots like this (Smith mimes the framing to be an extreme close-up from the nose to the hairline)—just the eyes. And as a young editor, I was toiling over that going, "He shot it for a reason. Why can I not figure this out?" I didn't want to cut to these close-ups of the eyes. I didn't get it. It wasn't making sense to me. And when I showed him the assembly, I'd used two cuts of the eyes, and he looked at me and said, "Just take out the two close-ups. That was just an idea. It's never going to work." I knew it wasn't going to work, but I wasn't experienced enough to not use that angle. I just thought that it was my problem. It just goes back to me saying that if you know you're doing something to please someone else, you're going to make a mistake. And what I should have done was not used the close-ups and waited for him to tell me, "The close-ups are for this particular moment." Learn to go with your gut.

Hullfish: What about you, Tom, anything you might have learned from something that went wrong?

Tom McArdle, Spotlight: Well, one time I didn't go to the sound mix on a film, and I saw the film a few months later, and it was missing all these key sound effects that I had put in as pre-laps to cuts. So a lot of cuts didn't work as well as they should have.

David Wu, Hard Boiled: There's one golden mistake. I'll tell you one. I started as a trainee editor for 18 months, then became an assistant, then became an editor cutting my first feature film. Just 18 months from scratch to becoming an editor. Nobody believes it. In those days, the senior editor would not teach you at all. They only enjoyed shouting at you. I learned splicing with cement. I tried to stand behind the senior editor's back, but he'd give me a dirty look and turn his back to me, and I'd have

to walk away. One day I found out that on the side of the editing room was a long dark alley where they'd throw out the black and white print out-takes. So I asked if I could have them. They said they were garbage. So I took all those film rolls and tried to cut the shots together. When people ask me, "Who is your mentor?" I say Sergio Leone, Kurosawa and … and another guy …

Hullfish: Sam Peckinpah.

David Wu: Yeah! Exactly! You read my mind. Peckinpah, Sergio Leone and Kurosawa. They are my mentors. The fourth mentor is myself.

Hullfish: The fourth horseman.

David Wu: Then, long story short, by 18 months, this director Chang Cheh, gave me a chance to cut his first movie called The Policeman.

He shot a scene with a very long take with the young rookies. And it's a very new star, almost like a new Brad Pitt making his first appearance. He shot a long take of this young star: He got off his bicycle, walked into a stadium that is having a karate competition where he's going to compete. It's a long take of him walking through the corridor into the dressing room into the locker. He took off his helmet, took off his jacket and took off his shoes and put on the karate suit and put on and tightened the belt, pushed the door, walked into the stadium in one take and started the first match.

At the same time, while he's inside changing, the competition is going on outside with about four or five pairs competing: slamming on the mat and trying to knock each other out. When I watched the dailies, I tried to be smart. Give the director some surprises, you know? At that time I was young, trying to prove myself. I watched the dailies and this is what I do: I have him get off the bike, walk into the corridor and push into the changing room. As soon as he pushes into the changing room, I cut. And I cut to the first fighting pair, and it says "Team One! Bam! Boom! Bam!" And then I cut back to the locker room, he took off his helmet, took off his jacket, zoom as soon as he took off jacket, then I cut to the guy. Half of the jacket out is the guy outside in the ring being pulled off his karate, get up, Bam, and then the fall of the jacket. And then I cut back to the locker room and then he took off his boots and put on the karate suit, and then as soon as he tightened his belt, I cut "Bam," and then outside they kick the shit out of each other. And then I have him push on the door go into it. I told myself, "David, you are a genius."

In those times the big director won't come into the editing room. He just watched it in the screening room, you know. So I just sit in the other corner. So that day I have that

scene cut ready and show it to him. He watched it, and then the lights came back on. I was waiting for the praise. Just like I was waiting for the surprise. And then it was silent for a couple of seconds.

He said, "David, I shot this long take with a purpose. The main purpose is to introduce a new upcoming star with one long take to see his young face, to see his fresh look, to see him all in one long take. Your editing is really advanced, but it did not tell my story and my purpose, so please put the whole long take back again." He didn't yell at me.

Hullfish: That was nice of him.

David Wu: Yeah. Even now I tell this story to a lot of young students about this mistake I made. You always serve the drama with your technique or tell the story that the directors want to tell with the scene by not allowing the technique to overshadow what the director wants to do. That was 40 years ago when I learned this first mistake, and I'm glad. I will never do the same mistake again.

How do you Judge the Editing of Others?

Hullfish: What are you looking for when you appreciate the editing in a movie? What's a film recently that you loved the editing on and why? How do you judge Mad Max versus Spotlight?

Steven Mirkovich, Risen: Gut instinct. Be the audience. You're judging your personal experience. I take judging very seriously. It's a privilege to have a voice. For those that don't know, here's how the Academy voting works: there's two votes in the Academy. The first, initial vote, depends on your branch. Editors vote for editing and Best Picture. Cinematographers vote for cinematography and Best Picture. Actors vote for actors and Best Picture, and so on. I've always felt that to be nominated was the biggest honor because it came from your peers in your respective branch. With the ACE, you nominate and then vote for your favorites. When judging, I don't have a list that I check off, but I have a feeling at the end of a picture whether that picture works. And if it does really work, how did editing come into play for that? Did it enhance what I saw? Did it move things along really well? Was the flow good? The editor who cuts Freddy Meets Jason may have done just as good of a job as the editor who cut Whiplash, but you are going to steer yourself to pictures that have the most meaning to you. Whether that's fair or not, that's just the way it is.

Tom McArdle: I like to see a film where I just get immersed in the movie—where I forget that I'm watching a film—where it is completely compelling. A few people

have mentioned Zodiac to me lately, and I remember watching that film and thinking, "My God, this is so well cut. I'm just totally interested, and two and a half hours just flew by."

Hullfish: As a voting member of various organizations that have awards in the film and TV industry, how do you judge good editing? How can you look at 10 movies and determine the best edited movie or TV show?

Billy Fox, Straight Outta Compton: I look for something that's different. Most all the submitted work is good. But I look for the technique that's a bit different. It's what motivates me but may not be what everyone else looks for.

> "If I'm emotionally engaged, then the film editing must be functioning well."

Tom Cross, Whiplash: In general, if I'm emotionally engaged, then I feel the film editing must be functioning well. If I see a great performance, then I like to think that it's well-edited because that performance is sculpted from hundreds or even thousands of pieces.

Sometimes, the editing is more obvious because the style or architecture of the storytelling is more overt. The filmmakers play with time, or the audience is aware of the pace of the story or the rhythm of the cuts. Those are often the films that get noticed for editing because the craft is easier to see. If I see a film or a scene that really affects me, I want to go back and examine it to try to understand how it was put together. That was the case with Sicario, a film I loved, which was directed by Denis Villeneuve and edited by Joe Walker. With that film, I see a movie that really was shaped in the editing room. It has beautifully crafted action but also shows a confident use of time and pace in order to create tension. The sequence showing the convoy crossing the border and driving through the streets of Juarez is elegantly and masterfully constructed. It's a very prolonged sequence that serves to introduce us to the characters and their setting but also to create an enormous amount of anxiety. At a glance the scenes appear expository—the convoy moves from one location to another—and could easily have been abbreviated and shortened. However, a choice was made to really inflate the time frame and build the anticipation in a very slow and deliberate way. As the convoy navigates the winding streets, it's like a rubber band keeps getting stretched and stretched, and you're just on the edge of your seat waiting for it to snap back. This feeling is caused by an editorial choice. These are the types of sequences that are usually a target for those that are merely concerned with content and not the

form. I'm glad that the filmmakers had the room to let the buildup breathe. What you see in that film leaves an impression. You experience it. It's memorable.

> "You don't judge editing, you judge the results."

Hullfish: Andy, what shows that something is well edited?

Andy Weisblum, Alice Through the Looking Glass: If there is nothing technically wrong about it. If I get caught up in the movie, and I'm caught up in the experience and feel something from it, and it works for me rhythmically. Whatever gets me the most excited watching it, or intrigues me the most, or moves me the most, I assume it's well-edited. Because I can't really know when they started or what they had to work with and they clearly didn't screw up the end results. (Laughs) You know? How do you judge editing? You don't judge editing, you judge the results.

Image 11.1 Isabelle Huppert in the movie Elle. © 2015 Guy Ferrandis / SBS Productions.

Leo Trombetta, Mad Men: As editors, we practice what my high school English teacher referred to as "the art that conceals art." It's impossible for anyone to know how difficult a scene was to cut without having access to the original dailies to see what problems he or she might have had to work with. This is why I find voting for the Oscars, Emmys or Eddies extremely difficult. On the one hand, if I'm noticing the editing too much, that's usually not a good thing. There may, of course, be sequences where the craft is a little more apparent, but as long as it's enhancing the experience and not merely showing off, it doesn't bother me. I suppose I'm more aware of bad editing, where the pace drags or where the rhythm of the cutting seems arbitrary.

> “We practice ‘the art that conceals the art.’”

Margaret Sixel, Mad Max: Fury Road: There’s room for all sorts of styles and approaches. I do have some recent favorites like The Imitation Game and Argo, both beautifully cut by William Goldenberg. When I watch a film, I want to be caught up in it and don’t specifically think about the editing. If it really works, I go back and attempt to analyze it. Believe it or not, I am more an indie person. One of my favorite films is Rosetta, directed by the Dardenne brothers. It has little dialogue and no music.

Job Ter Burg, Elle: It’s a bit abstract, but for me it’s the sense that whoever’s telling you the story has control. Sometimes you’ll watch a scene, and you will feel the scene is merely a registration of something that’s happening. But I love it when you feel that every single beat in the scene is under control. Of course you cannot fully rationalize that. And it can be hard to tell if it’s the editor or the director or the actors that are in control. But when I’m doing a workshop with students, with footage I know well, you can quickly tell if there is an intention behind the way a scene has been put together. Without that, a scene won’t work to the best of its ability.

> “I love it when you feel that every single beat in the scene is under control.”

Hullfish: A common quote is that “art is knowing when to stop.” How do you know that you’re done editing?

Billy Fox: I continually strive towards nurturing the cut until it no longer is a series of shots and cuts, but has become a real moment, as if you’ve peered through a window, and you’re watching a real moment of life.

Hullfish: And on that thought on “knowing when to stop,” I will.